

# A MINISTER OF GOD

## JOHN HAMILTON THOM

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A MINISTER OF GOD.



# A MINISTER OF GOD

SELECTIONS FROM THE  
OCCASIONAL SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

OF

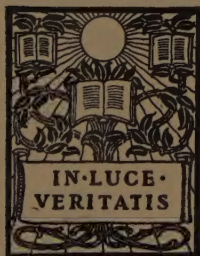
JOHN HAMILTON THOM

Author of "Laws of Life After the Mind of Christ,"  
"Christ the Revealer," "A Spiritual Faith," etc.

EDITED, WITH A MEMOIR,

BY

V. D. DAVIS



BOSTON  
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

1911



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## MEMOIR.

**J**OHN HAMILTON THOM was a native of the North of Ireland, but Liverpool was the city of his adoption. A young man of twenty-one, he came straight from college to settle there as minister of the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, removing after two years to the more central Renshaw-street Chapel. Before he was sixty he was compelled by a failure of voice to retire from active service, but Liverpool remained his home to the end.

For more than twenty years he had, as closest friend and brother in common work, James Martineau, the minister of Paradise-street Chapel, and afterwards of the new Hope-street Church ; and with them as an elder friend, minister at that time in Manchester, was John James Tayler. These three are always to be remembered together as kindred spirits, among the first in this country to be quickened by the influence of Channing to a deeper and more vivid religious life, and themselves the leaders of a new movement among English Uni-

tarians for a more spiritual interpretation of life. The old principles of fearless reverence and openness to all truth they inherited with the tradition of their churches, and amid the intellectual and religious conflicts of the nineteenth century they were pioneers among those who welcomed the new light of natural science, and the modern critical study of the Bible and early Christian history and the great religions of the world. Nurtured in a lowly Christian discipleship, their faith was established on the one sure foundation of communion with the living God, in which the things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned, and they were vindicators of the eternal realities of the inward life with God. What the character of their teaching was may best be seen in Tayler's 'Christian Aspects of Faith and Duty,' Martineau's 'Endeavours after the Christian Life' and 'Hours of Thought on Sacred Things,' and Thom's 'Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ.' Tayler and Martineau both removed to London as professors and successively principals of Manchester New College (now Manchester College, Oxford), but Thom's life was too deeply rooted in Liverpool for any other home to be possible for him, and there, in the autumn of 1894, at the age of eighty-six, he died. Martineau, who was his senior by nearly three years, lived for five years longer, and we have a last beautiful memorial of their friendship in the Preface which he wrote for the volume of Thom's sermons, 'A Spiritual Faith,' published in 1895.

Of Thom's early years in Ireland there is little record. He was born at Newry, Co. Down, January 10th, 1808. His father, the Rev. John Thom, a native of Lanarkshire, had crossed over from Scotland as quite a young man, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Auchterarder, and was ordained in 1800 as Presbyterian minister at Newry. There he also found his wife, a daughter of John Glenney, and several children were born to them. He died before John Hamilton was a year old.

The boy went to a good school at Newry, and thence in 1823 to the Belfast Academical Institution, where, while going through his own course of study for the ministry, he became assistant to Dr. Thomas Dix Hincks, as teacher of classics and Hebrew. The Professor of Theology was the Rev. Samuel Hanna, D.D., father of the biographer of Chalmers, who did not escape the keen criticism of his pupil. Speaking at the centenary meeting of Manchester College in 1886, Thom recalled his own college days, with gratitude and admiration for his teachers, all highly qualified, 'with one fatal exception.'

Unhappily the one exception was in theology. He was one of those not weighty but heavy and imposing men, who, as somebody said of Lord Thurlow, look wiser than any man ever was. He was Professor by local accident—appointed, not by the College authorities, but by the orthodox Synod of Ulster, because he was the minister of the leading Calvinistic Church in Belfast, where the College was. He might have done me lasting good if he had made me understand any first-rate theologian of his own school, if he had indoc-

trinated me into the mind and the Institutes of Calvin ; but he knew nothing as for a Professor he ought to have known it. Yet I have a tender feeling for his placid and gentle nature, and for the calm complacency of his unsuspected limitations.

A more helpful religious influence he must have received at home, from the Rev. John Mitchell, 'the wise and gentle pastor of his boyhood, from whom you would as little expect a revolutionary son as you would look for a Carlstadt in Melancthon's home.'<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, like the ministers Thom heard in Belfast, was Arian in doctrine, but with a touch of evangelical feeling in his teaching unusual among the heretics of those days.

But the chief teacher and inspirer of Thom's early manhood was Channing, of whom in 1880, at the Channing Centenary celebration in Liverpool, he spoke, in a passage which may be quoted here for the sake also of the further reference to his college days. Describing the first effect of Channing's writings on this side of the Atlantic, he said :—

I remember it. I remember a sense as of being new-born. I cannot speak worthily of Channing, but I can acknowledge my debt. Others had taught me much ; no one before had unsealed the fountain in myself. He was the first to touch the spring of living water, which made me independent even of himself. That is an obligation never to be forgotten ; with which none other can compare. I speak of myself, as among the first on this side of the ocean to receive the impact of his mind, only to illustrate what he was to so many ; the opener of a new religious life, not as the

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, Memorial Preface to 'A Spiritual Faith.'

founder of a school, but as the destroyer of all schools except the school of the spirit. About 1825, fifty-five years ago, I was living a severe but salutary life in the north of Ireland, little more than a boy, teaching seven hours a day in the great classical school of the Belfast Royal Institution, and for the rest of the working day going through my college course as a student under the professors, whose lecture rooms were in another department of the same building. I was living familiarly with scholars, of a race of scholars, the Bruces and the Hinckses, admirable and venerable men, walking in the light of their own convictions straight as a line, though, perhaps, rather as devout servants under the Old Covenant than as dear children under the New. They were Arians ; the only preaching I had heard up to that time was Arian, and Arianism being then upon its trial, about to be disowned, and cast out by the Presbyterianism of Ulster, was, as a learned school, making its appeal to external and textual foundations, not having, not knowing that it had, the predominant spring of its being in what may be briefly set forth as the one distinctive note, the root principle of Channing's Christianity—that all souls are of one Family. I remember how that light first came to me, and set me free for ever ; nor have I a more vivid recollection than of turning for a moment from weary work to steal a glance at the tract on Milton's 'Treatise on Christian Doctrine,' which the postman had just laid on my school desk ; and of being carried out of myself and my surroundings by its first lofty words.

The year in which Thom completed his college course brought the crisis among the Irish Presbyterians referred to in the above passage. The Secession took place in 1829, the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster being formed in the following year. But in this Thom had no part, for after

preaching for a few Sundays in Liverpool in the summer of 1829, his first sermon being preached in Renshaw-street Chapel, of which John Hincks, a son of his Belfast professor, was then minister, he was called to the pulpit of the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth (an old country chapel of Puritan origin, long since engulfed in the growing town), and so entered upon his life-work in this country. He came in the first glow of his young enthusiasm, kindled as it had been by the touch of Channing's inspiration, and at once by the ardour and devoutness of his nature, his profound earnestness, the unflinching directness of his appeal, the graces of a refined and beautiful character, and the clearness of his vision of spiritual things, made a deep impression on his hearers. For two years he was minister at the Ancient Chapel, and began to lay the foundations of that influence as teacher and friend which for three generations in the Liverpool community was exercised with intimate and far-reaching power for good. Then the young minister of Renshaw-street Chapel was cut off by an early death, and Thom succeeded his friend in the charge of the town congregation. His invitation to both pulpits bore the signature, among many others, of Roscoe the historian ; but before he had actually entered upon his ministry at Renshaw-street, he was called upon to preach the funeral sermon of that distinguished man. That sermon, and a volume of the sermons and occasional papers of John Hincks, his predecessor, edited with a

memoir, were Thom's first publications. It was on August 7th, 1831, that he entered on his new charge, and continued in it, with a break of three years (from 1854 to 1857), until his final retirement in February, 1867.

Looking back in old age upon the first years of his ministry, Thom gratefully acknowledged the stimulus he had received from the presence among his hearers of men of intellectual eminence, leaders in all the higher life of Liverpool, and women of high culture and refinement. Thus in reply to a letter of greeting on his eightieth birthday he wrote :—

I have ever held it to be the greatest blessing of my early ministry that there were in both my congregations enlightened men, and gracious, cultured women, whose weight and charm of character and deep religious earnestness of conviction and of life commanded reverence and affection—to which no ingenuous youth, under the burden and privilege of his office, would have desired, or dared, to offer less than the best that was in him. For a few years the strain was severe to unfurnished inexperience, but the yoke was beneficent and strengthening.

In the year following his appointment at Renshaw-street, James Martineau came to Liverpool after his brief ministry in Dublin, and entered upon twenty-five years of service with the second town congregation, meeting then in Paradise-street Chapel, while at the Ancient Chapel Thom had been succeeded by Charles Wicksteed, who also was drawn into closest friendship with the other two.

In those early days, while these young men were feeling so profoundly the influence of Channing, a further impulse of deeper life came to them, also from New England. Dr. Joseph Tuckerman, the friend and class-mate of Channing, had originated in Boston a new ministry to the poor, giving himself in apostolic simplicity to personal ministrations in their homes,<sup>1</sup> and this example had roused some of the most earnest spirits among English Unitarians, of whom William Johnson Fox was one of the chief, to a new sense of duty towards the neglected poor of our great cities. Martineau, before settling in Liverpool, had even considered a proposal that he should go to London to work among the poor; and when in 1833 Tuckerman came, invalided, on a visit to this country, he and Thom were among the first to greet him and to feel with new intensity the kindling touch of his enthusiasm. No interest was more constant throughout the lives of the two friends, and there was no cause that they pleaded with more convincing power than this of the ministry to the poor in great cities, which has taken shape in our Domestic Missions.

Thom preached the sermon on Christmas Day, 1835, out of which sprang the Liverpool Domestic Mission, and on the following Good Friday the two friends were among the chief of those who united in founding the society. Thom was the first secre-

<sup>1</sup> See Channing's Discourse on the Life and Character of the Rev. Joseph Tuckerman, D.D.

tary, and to him was due the appointment of John Johns, author of the well-known hymn, 'Come, kingdom of our God,' who was not only the first minister of the society in Liverpool, but in 1847, during a terrible epidemic of fever, the first martyr to the cause.

Speaking at the opening of the new buildings of the Domestic Mission in Mill-street, in November, 1892, his last public appearance, Thom recalled that visit of Tuckerman's nearly sixty years before, and told a characteristic story of his entire self-forgetfulness. They were coming down the steps of the Adelphi Hotel together, when the ardent missionary, lost in the interest of his subject, burst out with the exclamation : 'Oh ! that there was a devil, *one* devil, the source of all evil, that we might grapple on his heart with Christian love.' The sermon on 'Religion, the Church, and the People,' reprinted in this volume, and other selections, are the best proof of the intensity of Thom's interest in the Ministry to the Poor.

Another quickening influence came to him in those early years, through his intercourse with the venerable Joseph Blanco White. This remarkable man, a Spaniard, but of Irish descent, had been a Roman Catholic priest ; but revolting first from the persecuting spirit of that church, and its claim to infallibility, came to England in 1810. As the author of 'Doblado's Letters,' and other works, he soon became widely known, and was for some years an

honoured member of the Established Church in this country. But strong convictions both of reason and conscience compelled him at last to declare himself a Unitarian, and in 1835, leaving the household of Archbishop Whately, in Dublin, with whom he had been living on terms of warm friendship, he came to Liverpool, in broken health, a stranger and alone, there to end his life. But very soon, to his inexpressible comfort, he found true religious fellowship and new friends. Thom, especially, was drawn into intimate relations with him, and was appointed his literary executor. White's 'Observations on Heresy and Orthodoxy' was first published in the year of his arrival in Liverpool; the second edition, with a dedication 'to the Unitarians of Liverpool,' soon after the controversy of 1839. He died in 1841, after years of illness, attended with great helplessness and suffering, but borne with beautiful patience and a lofty faith. For the last months of his life, he found a home with the Rathbones, at Greenbank, 'that house of refuge for all the saints,' as Martineau happily described it.<sup>1</sup> In 1845, Thom published, in three volumes, his chief literary work, 'The Life of the Rev. Joseph Blanco White, written by himself, with portions of his Correspondence.' How watchfully the Editor guarded the memory of his friend, all

<sup>1</sup> It was of the William Rathbone of those days (1787-1868) that Tuckerman, having met him in the street, exclaimed to his companion: 'We are rewarded already; it is worth while to have crossed the Atlantic only to look into that man's face, and to have received such a greeting.'

readers of the Life of Archbishop Whately should be careful to note by turning to the article on that subject in the *Theological Review* of January, 1867.

On January 2, 1838, was celebrated in Renshaw Street Chapel, the marriage of John Hamilton Thom to Hannah Mary, the second daughter of William Rathbone, of Greenbank. Blanco White was to have taken the service, but was not well enough, and the duty fell to Martineau. It was the first wedding celebrated in the chapel, after the recent passing of the Dissenters' Marriage Act. The bride's father was at the time Mayor of Liverpool, and altogether it was a notable occasion. After their marriage, the Thoms lived for a short time in Chatham Street; but soon removed to Oakfield, a secluded house, charmingly situated in grounds adjoining Greenbank, and this remained their home to the last.

The year 1838 was notable in Thom's life for two other reasons. In the month of his marriage, he became a member of the committee of Manchester New College, then at York, but soon to be brought back to Manchester; and, in July, he brought out the first number of a new series of the 'Christian Teacher,' which he edited as a quarterly journal, until in 1845 it was merged in the larger 'Prospective Review,' when for ten years he shared the editorial responsibility with his three friends, Tayler, Martineau, and Wicksteed. Some at least of his articles contributed to these Reviews and their suc-

cessors—the ‘National’ (1855-64) and the ‘Theological’ (1864-79)—are noted in the Appendix.

Of the four editors of the ‘Prospective,’ two were in Liverpool, one in Manchester, and the fourth in Leeds, for there Wicksteed had settled in 1835, as minister of Mill Hill Chapel. Of their happy collaboration Martineau tells in the following passage, in the Memorial Preface to ‘A Spiritual Faith’ :—

People laughed at the apparently self-contradictory title [‘Prospective Review’]; for which, however, we offered the quoted motto, ‘Respice, Aspice, Prospice,’ as sufficient apology and answer. Mr. Thom, having his hands most free, was executive editor; but the contents of the successive numbers were blocked out at cabinet councils held at one of our Liverpool or Manchester houses. We dined and spent the evening together, often remaining till next day. And in the wide landscape of the past that lies before me in this evening of my life, there are few spots picked out by brighter glow than those hours of loving and animated converse. We were different enough, in modes and material of thought, to stimulate each other, yet so congenial as to be drawn nearer by the polarity. To see Mr. Tayler’s richly stored reverent, and delicate mind set free as a child at play, was in itself an object-lesson in wisdom and beauty. Mr. Thom’s habitual inner life among high ideals, and consequent quick detection of imposture and inanity in the actual, could find its grave expression, from the pulpit or the platform, in severe rebuke; but, when only friends were present and offenders away, in a vein of picturesque humour, so refreshing that, even if the victim were there, he would feel like a patient under treatment who, with bitter expectations, found himself let off with a pleasant effervescent draught. The other two partners had the delightful privilege of enjoying the feast of soul, bringing to it only a homely contribution of common-sense and some knowledge of affairs.

Would that we could hear Thom's comment on that last remark!

With Manchester College, Thom's connection was of the closest. No one better understood the principle of free teaching and free learning in Theology maintained in that 'School of the Prophets.' For forty-six years, with two short breaks, he was a member of the committee, and in 1866 succeeded the Rev. S. Bache as one of the Visitors of the College. On retiring from the committee in 1891, he was appointed a vice-president. At the trustees' meeting in June, 1886, celebrating the centenary of the college, he stood once more side by side with Dr. Martineau, in University Hall, to re-affirm in fervent tones the necessity and the great responsibility of freedom, for growth in the knowledge of God:—

We meet here to-day as Trustees of this school of the prophets—Trustees for what? Guardians of what? Of freedom to grow in the knowledge of God. That simply is the talent entrusted to us; a talent capable of unlimited productiveness and reproductiveness, and, therefore, not to be wrapped in any napkins of finality. Our Lord's money with usury, the usury being more knowledge of God, with higher service, will not come from the mere assertion of our liberty, but from the practical application of it, ennobled and strengthened by such gains of truth and access of light, such increase of seeing power as may be accorded to us from generation to generation.

Those students of the college were happy, who were privileged to hear his addresses on the power of the pulpit and the nurture of the spiritual life

With strong awakening power, but with the touch of most delicate sympathy and the surest insight, he spoke of that calling to which his own life was so nobly dedicated.

Passages from these addresses and a Valedictory Address to students leaving college are included in this volume.

In the famous controversy in 1839, when the three Liverpool Unitarian ministers were called upon to defend their Christianity from the attack of thirteen clergymen of the Church of England,<sup>1</sup> Thom delivered four lectures, the first on 'The Practical Importance of the Unitarian Controversy,' the others on 'Christianity, not the property of Critics and Scholars, but the gift of God to all men,' 'The Unscriptural Origin and Ecclesiastical History of the Doctrine of the Trinity,' and 'The Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, who dwelleth in us and teacheth all things.' Apart from the distastefulness of controversy with very bigoted opponents, these were congenial subjects to him, and were dealt with by the young man of only thirty-one with a grasp of knowledge, a clearness of logical discernment, and a depth of spiritual understanding which must have

<sup>1</sup> An admirable account of this controversy, from the pen of the late Charles Wicksteed, will be found in the 'Theological Review,' of January, 1877. The volume of the Unitarians' Lectures, with the preliminary correspondence, is still to be had, and is of permanent value and interest. With Martineau and Thom, the third Unitarian minister was Henry Giles (1809-73), who succeeded Wicksteed at the Ancient Chapel, and in 1840 went to America.

astonished his assailants. They showed him already a mature thinker, and a man with a prophet's message, none the less searching and quickening because it was delivered in quiet and measured tones. In the correspondence, as in the lectures, keenness and strong indignation are apparent ; but none of the unworthy passion so often generated in theological disputes. It was of these lectures that Channing wrote to Harriet Martineau :—

You speak of your brother James. Since writing to you, I have read all his lectures ; and they seem to me among the noblest efforts of our times. They have quickened and instructed me. Indeed, his lectures and Mr. Thom's give me new hope for the cause of truth in England. Not that I expect any great immediate effect ; but noble spiritual action in a few is an augury of good which cannot fail.

The lectures cannot be read without admiration of their power, and wonder at the readiness and completeness with which they were produced in so short a time.

The three years following this controversy are marked by the deaths of Tuckerman, Blanco White, and Channing in succession, each leaving precious memories and the strength of abiding influence, to enrich a ministry always receptive of what was highest and best.

The preparation of the memoirs of Blanco White published in 1845, though a labour of love, can have been no light task. In 1851 Thom published, in Chapman's Catholic Series, a study of St. Paul's

Epistles to the Corinthians, 'an attempt to convey their spirit and significance.' The book, the substance of which had been delivered as morning sermons to his congregation nine years before, is dedicated to Martineau, as having for its aim, 'to exhibit spiritual Christianity, as God's provision for the deep and glorifying wants that arise out of the inherent religiousness of human nature.' Martineau, in 1847, had dedicated to his friend the second volume of the 'Endeavours after the Christian Life,' as 'the expression of a heart enlarged by his friendship and often aided by his wisdom.'

In 1854, having been for twenty-five years in the ministry, Thom took a step on which he had long ago determined, and retired for a time from active work. His conviction was that after such a term of service in one place, 'a minister of religion ought, if it is possible, to pause for a period, that he may not fall into a life of routine; that he may not have to speak beyond the truth of his feelings, nor beyond the natural desire of his spirit to unfold itself before other men; and that with a freshened and deepened heart into which religious feelings have quietly collected, without a constant demand for expression, he may cherish the hope of entering upon a later and richer term of life.'

The Farewell Sermon, in which this was stated, and which shows how hard was the trial of parting when the time came, is a wonderful revelation of

the man, the more impressive because he so seldom spoke of himself. Not knowing then whether it might not be a final separation, he left his people with tender words of farewell, but also with noble words of exhortation, some of which will be found among the selections in this volume.

For three years the Renshaw-street pulpit was occupied by William Henry Channing, Dr. Channing's nephew and biographer, while Thom was chiefly travelling abroad; but in 1857 the way opened for his return. Channing took the pulpit of Hope-street Church, left vacant by Martineau's removal in that year to London; and in November, Thom resumed his ministry. How greatly he had profited by his time of rest, and with what renewed consecration he once more entered his old pulpit, his first three sermons on 'The Preacher and the Church' remain to show; and of his preaching during the remaining years of his active ministry the two volumes of the 'Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ' are a lasting monument.

In 1858, Thom edited a hymn-book for the use of his congregation, and in 1859 published six sermons, in a little volume, 'Christ the Revealer,' with the fuller title, 'The revelation of God and Man in the Son of God and the Son of Man.' In this year also was preached the sermon on 'A Religion, not a Theology, the Want of the Times,' a plea for the Missionary project of the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire, after which, in the follow-

ing year, the Liverpool District Missionary Association was founded.

In 1866, Thom finally closed his ministry at Renshaw-street, although for two months longer he still occupied the pulpit. He was then only fifty-nine, in the fulness of his powers, but was compelled to this step by a failure of voice, to his deep regret. His farewell sermon, 'The Church of God's Building,' was preached February 24th, 1867, the Sunday before his successor, Charles Beard (1827-1888), entered on his ministry.

How great a trial this relinquishment of active work was to Thom, he partly revealed in his reply to a letter of sympathy and grateful acknowledgment, which he received from the congregation of Hope-street Church. They had referred to his many services, and among them his part in the establishment of the Ministry to the Poor, and Thom wrote in reply :—

In referring to the origin of our Domestic Mission Society, you carry me back to the Good Friday of 1836, into the presence of the honoured men on the crowded platform in Renshaw-street Chapel, who were then among our leaders, and have since gone from us ; and if you thus remind me that I have latterly been ministering to younger generations, to children whose parents do not remember that day, you give me reason to thank God that I have lived in as close accordance with the last as with the first, and that it is not because I have fallen out of sympathy with the freshest age that I have been compelled to retire from my place.

Indeed, in wishing me to take, as though I had earned it, the rest from public duty which is not my own choice

for myself, but God's will for me, you have touched the most sensitive nerve of my spirit, which has not yet submissively ceased to beat against my peace of heart. For the rest enforced upon me is not that which nature so willingly takes because she needs it. I am silenced, cut off from that for which alone I have any acquired fitness in this world, not because I am worn out, not because God has ceased to feed my mind with thought or my heart with inspiration, not because I am incapable of labour or fatigue, but because the highest external function of my office, the faculty of effectual speech, has for a time, perhaps for ever, been taken from me. In the rest you desire me to enjoy I have but one spiritual satisfaction, the knowledge that it would have been presumption of the worst kind, as though I was in any way needed, to resist the necessity laid upon me.

Your great kindness has led me to unveil the wound of this trial as, perhaps, I have not done before ; for such has been the tenderness of those from whose spiritual service I am separated, that in withdrawing from them I could only turn to their gains and compensations, whilst with you I can speak of my own personal affliction. I thank you from my heart that, by your generous words of sympathy and confidence, you have completed the external alleviations of my sorrow, and that, knowing now how kindly I have been interpreted by all among whom I have lived and served, my only struggle is with myself, my only sigh out of the freshly awakened perception of that fuller place in the spiritual love of all towards whom God gave me opportunity, which might have been mine if, through all the days of my strength, I had more richly won the trust so ready to be given.

I look to brighter days for the Church of the living God—not as contributing to our glory, but rather that, as gradually set free from the necessities of controversy, and of insulated duty, through the growing spiritual unity

of Christ's people, Christendom may come, as with one heart, to turn its face towards the all-quickenning light of God's holy love, and to spend its strength in sacrifice for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

To the end of his life Thom remained a member of the Renshaw Street congregation, and for some years occasionally occupied his old pulpit again. Once also he preached for a succession of Sundays at Crewe, and in 1872, during the summer months, at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, in the absence of Dr. Sadler abroad. But the remainder of his life was passed in retirement, though never in idleness, for to the end he exercised a silent ministry of the deepest and most helpful kind, and his public speeches, especially at meetings of Manchester College and of the Domestic Mission Society, were sources of inspiration to many hearers almost to the end.

It was in 1872 that he edited the letters of John James Tayler, and wrote a preface for the second edition of an exquisite little book, 'Echoes of Holy Thoughts,' of which further particulars will be found in the appendix. In 1883, in response to the earnest request of many friends the first volume of the 'Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ,' was published, followed by the second in 1886.

The last twenty-two years of Thom's life were solitary in his own home, the great shadow of his wife's death having fallen on the last day of 1872. He himself passed peacefully away on September

2nd, 1894, in the eighty-ninth year of his age, and one grave in the burial ground of the Ancient Chapel, marked by a beautiful cross, with the names of his mother and his wife, now also bears his own. In the Ullet Road Church, in Sefton Park, to which the Renshaw Street congregation removed in 1899, the central window in the chancel is also a memorial to him.

In bringing this brief memoir to a close, we must be content to gather up a few personal testimonies to Thom's power as a preacher and a speaker, and to the profound influence of his personality.

Thus in a memorial article in the *Liverpool Daily Post* (October 9, 1894) by the Rev. L. P. Jacks, at that time minister of Renshaw Street Chapel, there is this vivid picture of the old man :—

To the last Mr. Thom retained and exercised that power of personality beyond which our analysis cannot go. Though age had bowed his form and dimmed the lustre of an eye once aglow with a light of love and thought, yet the outward bearing of the man still wore its accustomed air of benignant grace. As we sat and talked with him, something more eloquent than speech told us of a mind and character which had gained their quality through habitual converse with the highest forms of excellence and truth. From the man as we knew him, in the quiet harbour of his latter days, it was easy to read backwards to the story of his active voyage on the sea of life. Through years of quiet self-discipline, of human love readily given and received, of untiring work for will and mind, of habitual reverence for what is highest in nature, art, and religion, John Hamilton Thom

had won the secret which leads men on to a serene and beautiful old age.

Of the depth of the influence he exerted, and the veneration with which he was regarded by those to whom he ministered for so long, it is impossible adequately to speak. The services of baptism, marriage and burial, which he continued to conduct even after his retirement, left with his people as one generation followed another, the most sacred and impressive memories. In constant intercourse with members of his congregation, with ready sympathy and an understanding heart, he 'never failed to be a strong support, and to interpret God's love in all the vicissitudes of life.'

In the Memorial Preface from which we have already quoted, Dr. Martineau bore testimony to the incomparable power of his public speaking:—

The quiet composure of his figure as he rose, the conversational neatness of his first words, obviously springing out of something that had just been said, the smooth gliding into his subject without either pause or haste, set the hearer at ease from the first, and delivered him 'all ear' to what was to follow. And whatever that might be, it would gleam with intellectual light—a flash of happy insight, or the explosion of a dangerous fallacy; or burn with moral fervour—of compassion for unheeded sorrows, or indignation at shameful wrongs. His unpremeditated addresses brought out many a latent contrast that may have surprised himself: a play of humour, for instance, at which a Puritan might look grave, but which is but the obverse side of the pathetic soul; and a power of rebuke startling in a nature so gentle and refined, yet irrepressible in its revulsion from whatever is mean and

gross. The slow and calm deliberation with which the intensest feelings and most touching allusions came forth, was more affecting than any rapid torrent of vehement passion, and left on the hearer an ineffaceable image of dignified self-possession.

And to a similar effect the Rev. Alexander Gordon wrote in a memorial article in the *Christian Life*, (Sep. 8, 1894):—

His pulpit manner was measured and tranquil, his tones deep and mellow; his sentences flowed with a cadence grave and sweet. At all times there was something majestic in his style, while in his unwritten addresses at the Communion the chastened fervour of his spiritual nature streamed forth in rich simplicity from the hidden springs. As with many other preachers, the vivacity of his address was reserved for his speeches on occasions of social and denominational business. Here he allowed scope to his wonderful faculty for subtle and penetrating humour, which could be gay and could be severe. No one who had fallen under the dissecting analysis of his incisive sarcasm would be likely to forget the lesson, or to dispute its justice. Nor could any one who listened to his inspiring utterances in the cause of philanthropy, filled with genial reminiscence and happy allusion, escape the elevating compulsion of his moving appeal.

For a year, just before Thom's retirement, the Rev. J. Edwin Odgers was associated with him as assistant minister at Renshaw Street, and that early experience, together with after years of friendship, give a special interest to the following reminiscences, contributed to the memorial notice in the *Liverpool Unitarian Annual* for 1895:—

I feel sure that many who have known Mr. Thom only during the later years of his life—(I might perhaps say—since

Mrs. Thom's death) can hardly understand what a large element there was in him of playful humour, of truly Irish archness, a power of giving an unexpected amusing turn to a dull subject, or cutting some Gordian knot of debate by a stroke of caustic wit. If he had loved controversy he would have been a matchless debater. There were occasions on which he let loose his powers of ridicule, delicately graduated from refined satire to scathing sarcasm. But I may undertake to say, that it was only when there was some assumption or presumption that called for sharp rebuke—some obscuring of important issues by words without knowledge—that Mr. Thom allowed himself to be sarcastic. He never lowered the seriousness of discussion by using wit instead of argument, where he recognised serious purpose in his opponent. I have often seen the opportunity given—seized at once by Mr. Thom's alert mind—for a moment a lightning flash in the eye, and a keen smile playing round the mouth—the retort was on his lips; but it was not spoken. His patient sense of honour scorned an easy victory or a small retaliation.

You ask me about his preaching thirty years ago. I have never known anything like it. I think the great secret of its power was that 'he preached not himself.' Singularly free from any kind of personal or local allusion, from any element of consideration for the special circumstances of himself or of others, it might be thought very *abstract*—it looks so on the printed pages of his sermons. It was abstract as all true poetry is, belonging to all men and all times; and speaking for them, as well as to them. As to the manner of it, it was marvellous how the preacher threaded his way through those long and intricate sentences—written on small note paper, in his fine thin hand, lines close together, and (what is so perplexing to the reader), with perpetual hyphens of which nobody can tell beforehand whether they introduce amplifications, or antitheses, or parentheses; but he never stumbled or lost his place. And the effect—when you heard

it, you knew that there was a Word, sharply piercing as a two-edged sword, dividing the joints and marrow. We used to laugh at a story told of a certain man who gave up attending Renshaw Street Chapel, and alleged as his reason, that the morality taught by Mr. Thom was impracticably high. The basis of fact at the bottom of the story is obvious. I cannot conceive of any preaching that turns so exclusively on the highest sanctions of life and conduct as Mr. Thom's. All the things of earth are regarded *sub specie aeternitatis*. All duties spring from a spiritual *Noblesse oblige*. 'To walk worthy of God' is no longer a far off consideration, but 'very near us, even in our hearts'; our 'high calling in Jesus Christ' is the true vocation of man.

If his preaching was as a rule 'abstract,' his appeal came with the more overwhelming force when he dealt directly with some pressing question of the hour, as in the sermon at the time of the Irish Famine in 1847, and the sermon for the Liverpool Dispensaries, which is included in this book. In the sermon on 'The Church of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus: one Fold and one Shepherd,' also reprinted here, and embodying part of the annual sermon preached in 1850 before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, will be found a forcible presentment of Thom's ideal of Church life.

As to his sermons as a whole, Mr. Jacks wrote in the article from which we have already quoted:—

The immediate environment in which John Hamilton Thom fulfilled his task was the religious body known as Unitarian. But in a deeper sense he belongs to the whole Christian world. His published writings convey the simple utterance of a man of God. As such they will long survive

their author, and long continue to touch the deepest springs of human life. If, as some say, Time has a secret for sifting out and preserving the true grain of human speech, then surely the work of this man is a permanent addition to the spiritual treasury of the race. Published sermons belong to the most ephemeral class of literature, and, as published, they are not infrequently an obvious mistake. But the sermons of Mr. Thom form a lasting storehouse of the bread of life. They are the expression of a soul manifestly impelled to utterance by the power of the Spirit. In the happier future, when the differences between Christians are rated at their proper worth, readers of these sermons will forget to ask of what complexion was their author's creed. They will think of him only as one born in the highest rank of souls, quickened by the consciousness of God, trained by communion with the spirit of Christ, and sublimely confident of the inner truth of the message given him to deliver.

And let the concluding words of this memoir be those in which Dr. Martineau spoke in the Memorial Preface of the sermons of his friend:—  
'He who ministers here is no priest of any altar made with hands, but a prophet of Him who is a Spirit, and communes with those whose worship is in spirit and in truth. And if they are yet but a scattered host, it will not be always so. It needs but voices of the Spirit, like that which bears its witness here, to wake response from every side, and wider and wider spread the spiritual family of God.'

SELECTIONS FROM SERMONS AND  
ADDRESSES.



## SELECTIONS FROM SERMONS AND ADDRESSES.

### I.

#### THE CENTRAL TRUTH.

WHAT is that Religion to the administration of which I am called purely to devote my life, without mixture of other aim? What is its definition, its scope, its perfect work? It is simply that religion which consists in a man's opening his spirit to the Divine Spirit; in knowing himself to be a child of God; in having, more and more, the life and the peace of a child of God. It is the religion which will take a man out of himself, which will relieve him from low cares by giving him higher cares, the cares that are the upper currents of desire, with which ever mingle the far-off sounds of heaven: a religion which will make him more and more independent of mortal circumstances, if his soul is growing—which in all his needs will give him unmeasured confidence in a God of infinite compassion and holiness,—a

confidence which no man can have whose own soul is not compassionate and holy.

Our business here is not with the religion of other men, but with our own,—with the religion which is the *salvation* of the soul, which means the *health* of the soul; and our only concern with theology, doctrine, or controversy is that no veils may separate us from that religion which would draw most powerfully, most really to God, or rather that no veils may separate us from that God who would draw us to Himself. And that religion, that Word of God which is to draw all men unto it, that sword of the spirit piercing through men's souls, the discerners of thoughts, the revealer of the intents of the heart, is the man Christ Jesus. *The life that we live, we live by the faith of the Son of God.* I take up again, and at once the one great truth that I have ever uttered in this place—that has been, and ever must be, the key-note to all I have to say. Jesus Christ taught a religion by *being* a religion. He is himself the glorious gospel of the blessed God. *This is my Son*, God said, and says, to all the sons of men. Religion is the right relation of man to God: Jesus Christ is the one example of that relation, the living way to the Father,—a way in which you must walk yourselves if you would have a Father, if you would *know* that you have a Father. We are called to be children of God: we are in no ignorance of what that means: the man Christ Jesus was a perfect child of God.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

## II.

## THE CHURCH'S SINGLENES OF AIM.

WE must here in no way minister to self-importance. True religion is ever, and in all directions, the destruction of that. We must in no way indulge here in much discussion about ourselves, or about our missions,—except only as human beings, surrounded by human beings, bound to all the duties and to all the charities of men. Instead of asking for our place and office, as though we were soldiers perfectly equipped, and waiting only for a field,—ask rather, what is the great office of religion, of Christ, of the Father's spirit in you. To make you purer, freer, kinder, more unselfish, generous, guileless, more apt to give, less anxious to receive,—with your supreme joy in loving and serving God, and all whom God loves,—more easily satisfied as to all that supplies and serves your lower nature, but with a growing hunger and thirst for whatever feeds your spiritual life: this is the work of religion and the minister of religion—not to philosophize on religion—not to determine the theory of religion, but to make you religious—to reach your conscience by the spirit of God's mercy—to fill your souls with His holiness. God will do great things through us, though for the most part they will be all unknown to us, when He has done great things *in* us, when we are meek, pure, patient, self-governed, humble through the intensity of our

higher life and the loftiness above us, not seeking to make a great place for ourselves, but to be great in faithfulness to the place given us, though we should be but one of the stones placed out of sight in the building of God.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

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### III.

#### THE QUICKENING OF LIFE IN THE CHURCH.

THERE is at present a not infrequent complaint in our churches that our Christianity has not assumed a settled form; an undefined craving for new light; a disturbing, unpractical impression that we have not yet reached a final and completed religion. And I believe it is thought that the ministers of religion are responsible for this state of things.

I would say, then, that we have got all the light that God will ever give us, except the light that comes from life. Have we used the religion that we have? Is the knowledge of God that shines in the face of Christ too little for us? Was the Forerunner not tempted enough, to be an example and succour to us also who are tempted? Has not God selected *one of our own brethren* on whom to show what would be the character, and spirit, and effort, and prayer, and power of a true child of His, —and then raised Him into Heaven to show that

with God Himself is the Home of those who here live and love and suffer in His Spirit? *Is not this enough of definiteness?* Can anything be less vague than the Word made Flesh? Have we suffered it to come to us 'in words,' but made no experience of its 'power'? If so, it is easy to understand any amount of religious discontent. If so, must not the Spirit that once spoke to the early churches now say to us, 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God'?

But it is said, 'The administration of religion is so powerless.' It may be so; but, have you warmed it by the participation of a fervent heart? Has the feebly uttered truth been passed with power through your own souls, or fallen on sensibilities prepared to kindle? Has the lifeless prayer become life within your spirits? Have you prayed, or only listened? Have you really conceived of yourselves as members of a church at all, a communion for the purpose of fostering the religious life in one another, in which every earnest spirit breathes its own temper into all? Have you strengthened its feebleness, and given reality to its ordinances, so that in the words of St. Paul, 'If a stranger was to come among you, an unbeliever, or a gainsayer, he would be convinced of all, and the secrets of his heart made manifest, so that falling down on his face he would worship God along with you, and report that God was in you of a truth'?

*Charge at Gloucester, 1849.*

## IV.

## THE WITNESS THAT IS REQUIRED.

THE world is fast ripening for great religious changes ; it waits only for bright and clear testimonies to the practical power of the very truth *you* hold,—and these testimonies will now be given in unmistakeable manifestations of the religious life in connection with views that conscience and reason can accept. Believe me that the time is past for controversy and the pulpit to settle these things—the world is thirsting not for theories, but for great good works of faith—for practical solutions of the spiritual difficulties of society—for the harmony of light and life—and *wherever* these appear it will now accept them gladly as bearing the manifest signatures of God.

This is the work that remains for this and the next generation of Unitarians,—to hold before the world the clear signs of a genuine religious enthusiasm ; of spiritual aspirations that rise into toil and sacrifice as their natural sphere ; of a practical devotion to God and Christ and the heavenly kingdom upon earth, in combination with a large and reconciling truth, with freedom, and with love. This is the work that remains to supplement and glorify all our controversies : it remains for the young : and in this community it very largely remains for the young of this congregation. Upon you, the rising families

of this church, a great work rests. You have knowledge, you have culture, you have position, you have wealth—and I know that you have many invitations and quickening impulses from God. To you ere long it will belong to uphold or to let fall, to illustrate or to tarnish, the cause of Christian truth and spiritual freedom in this community; on you will come the heritage of your fathers, in these happier times when you are asked only to adorn it by your lives, and by your spirit of religious enterprise and love to commend it to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Alas, for you, if it fails in your hands! Alas, for you, if you are found unworthy! Alas, for you and for me, if, through anything that is common to us, fashion, or levity, or any pretence, so blind you to duty and true dignity, that you should sink into the crowd of those who have no individual religious life, who know not what it is to be witnesses and martyrs for God, to watch reverently in faith and patience by the obscure seed-time whose harvests shall be gathered in with glory, and with universal rejoicing!

Your distinguishing principles are clear as the sunlight, and may be stated in two sentences. You are *DISSENTERS*, not because you *have* the truth, but because you have, and shall ever have, freedom *to find it*; that in the faith of progress you may worship the God who gives you light. You are *UNITARIANS*, because you are not, and will not be,

*Sectarious*; because you see clearly that the folds whose fences are speculative orthodoxies must always exclude some portion of the flock of Christ,—and that the principle of the Church Universal, as laid down in the Saviour's prayer,—that all men should be one with the Father even as he was,—is simply the recognition of the Image of God in human nature.

*Farewell Sermon, 1854.*

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## V.

### A FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

EVERY Church that has a right of existence must be characterized by some fundamental spiritual principles or assumptions; and by some theory of the legitimate functions of our own being, as ultimate criterion of belief, towards the things of God. Some grounds of pure sentiment—some conditions of pure reason, of the right relations of man's nature and faculties to the media of Divine manifestation, real or alleged, must mark any Church that has a right to break, by its appearance, the external unity of Christ's people.

And for ourselves we willingly admit that no justification would serve us short of this, that the ground we occupy is the only centre at which it is possible for a universal Church to have spiritual unity amid intellectual diversity, and for truth to

come to it at last full-orbed in the ultimate harmony of our many-sided nature, without even a momentary separation of hearts whilst we are waiting for that great result.

Deeply, then, as we value the distinguishing beliefs which we think that God has taught us, essential as the profession and the maintenance of these is to our own spiritual life and honesty,—it is yet not these distinguishing beliefs that define us as a Church, but rather the attitudes of our souls towards God and Christ and man which enable us freely to receive whatever the Father of spirits may commend to our spirits, without doubting that the spirit of the Father, and the spirit of the Son, breathing the same filial trust, the same divine hope, the same yearning love dwell with others, who, to use a Scripture expression, think as we do with their hearts, but do not think as we do with their minds. It is true that at the present the other Churches, in their systems at least, not only differ from us in doctrines or opinions, but that their doctrines deny what to us is central, that our souls and minds must be ever open to God and Christ and the influxes of truth and are safe in being so open—so that we cannot say that their doctrines or opinions are essential to *their* existence as Churches. Well, that only shows the depth and breadth of our position—that the other Churches, in profession at least, make their opinions the very centre of their spiritual being, and so are bound by logical consistency to ex-

communicate us whilst we are not so bound towards them,—are bound in logical consistency to disbelieve that we can be Christians in heart unto salvation whilst we have no such fears towards them. This surely is *our* justification. If the Church of Christ is to be more than a sect, our centre for that Church is not reconcilable with their centre for it ; but it is reconcilable, and this makes its strength, with our heartiest recognition of them individually as Christians every one.

At *our* centre, all who profess and call themselves Christians may keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. No difference in doctrine requires us to regard any as fallen away from Christ. True, we are Unitarians, and, being so, must for ourselves contemplate God and revelation in the light of that belief ; but it is not true that with us this breaks Christian fellowship, or that it need be broken at all with those by whom God is loved as the Father of our spirits, and Christ is loved as the image of God in man. The true fellowship is with all who are united in the love of the truth, and who having the same desire after the infinite God can aid one another, even by their differences, in the pursuit of that which in itself is inexhaustible.

Why, then, have we a Church at all ? Because no other Church will permit us to be free ; because no other Church will permit us to be true to our own light, and to respect theirs. But any ground of mere antagonism is false to our position, any affinity

of opinion too contracted for our sympathy. Our hearts are set upon a Church bound only by allegiance to the truth as God may commend it to every man's conscience,—with no terms of communion but the desire to be joint members of that great family in earth and in heaven, in which Christ represents the spirit of all the children to the Father, and of all the brethren to one another.

But it would be a strange mistake to say that this was to make Liberty our bond of union. It is to make Christian liberty our bond of union in the Christian Church—the love of something in Christ which we recognize as divine and measureless, with liberty to search into it and to be enriched by it more and more. Mere liberty can never be a bond of union. That you are free to go one way, and I am free to go another, can never draw our steps together. Yet even this liberty may subserve union; for if what you find is better than what I find, or what I find is better than what you find, the one may follow the other,—or if both find good things, the one may share with the other, and both be enriched,—and then our union will be through a common love by the means of a common liberty. Without the common love, individual liberty could only lead to universal separation.

What then *is* the common love, the common pursuit, the common good, that is our bond of union within the Church of Christ? Surely it is the feeling, the common consent, however

acquired, that Christ is to all of us a central source of spiritual light and treasure, and that what, as it exists in him, is too large for any *one* of us to grasp, he offers more and more to our joint and loving search. If a man thinks that Christ is not, in any sense, a centre of spiritual Truth, he will not claim to stand within the Christian Church, and so far in regard to him no question will arise. If a man does claim to stand within the Christian Church, the claim will come not from his liberty, but from his love, from his belief that the riches of God are in Christ, and that so largely that the search for them, the interchange of them, a common life and joy in them, may become a bond of union among men. We must believe that there is treasure hid in a field, before, for love of that treasure, we will sell all that we have that we may possess that field and work it to the utmost; and though liberty will for ever be necessary for its continuous cultivation and its richer yield, and that we may bring to its culture the new lights and methods of science—still it is not liberty which unites men in this common labour, but their common love for the treasure which they hope to find. It is not because they are free, that men are drawn by one desire towards any gold fields, *though they must be free* that they may go, and that they may thoroughly explore. Love for the hidden riches is the common attraction—but Freedom will for ever be the condition of their deeper search, and of their richer gains. And when the Love that

employs our Freedom is the desire for God and His Truth, its last issue is in *spiritual* Liberty, the liberty that is constrained only by love, by the love that casts out all fear and all unwillingness, for the whole heart is towards Him whose service is perfect freedom. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty : the liberty of a perfect Man.

1. And spiritual Liberty manifestly requires some immediate fellowship with God. Nothing else could protect us from man's authority, and give us self-subsistence. If we cannot appeal to a higher witness, how are we to stand against the witness of men, speaking in the name of traditions and of the wisdom of the Past ? To this end we must have absolute reliance on the teachings of God *in* us. God is a Spirit : and we are spirits : and to the spirit He makes Himself known. Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God. These are the elements of religious Life.

2. But even the immediate intuitions of the soul grow and enlarge with the culture of our whole nature. He who looks upon the universe of God with the eye of Newton will receive a different impression of God from that of the child, though, according to the measure of the grace given unto them, both their hearts are pure. As intellectual misconceptions of God and of His ways are removed, the soul, if free, becomes more susceptible of true intuitions. And as all things are of God, it is part of our spiritual life to confide in all we learn of Him

through any of the faculties that He has given us, to believe that all Truth makes free, that with the growth of science, of reason, of all knowledge, we see less and less by broken lights, and become purer mirrors for Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

3. And since spiritual things are spiritually discerned, all Divine manifestations come *to the soul*, to be received, or not, as the soul is able to bear them. Therefore, the Bible does not come as the Spirit comes, without appeal: does not come as the living Word comes, spoken in the soul itself. But the Bible is the history of the religious life of Man among those who knew God best, according to their own best comprehension of it, or the best comprehension of it by those to whom they communicated it. It is a record of the spiritual impressions and ideas received from age to age in the continuous life of a peculiar people; a record human and fallible, for, with one exception, God's Word to a soul is received imperfectly, and then, *without* exception, is transmitted imperfectly, and finally is reported imperfectly; a record, therefore, with many admixtures by which the soul is not bound. This our liberty here from the letter that killeth is not for the sake of liberty, nor in the pride of liberty, but that we may be open to the teachings of God's own Spirit. Ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building. The Scriptures aid us effectually, when through the lives of His children and His saints we so know the

Father, that the Spirit which giveth life is its own witness in our hearts.

4. Nor is it otherwise with Christ himself. He said, that he received not witness from man. His great end was to show us the Father, that we, too, should become children of His Spirit, one with God as he was one with Him. None of us are spiritually taught until God Himself teaches us, and the great office of a Son of God in our humanity is to lead us into the real Presence and leave us there, having removed every veil that could hide our Father's face. We call him Mediator, and so he is, the highest conceivable, because himself the Image of God in Man. Only let us remember, that it is not the office of a Mediator to detain a soul with himself, but to place it in personal communion with the Fountain of life. In the spiritual sense everything to us is mediation, except the direct touch of God's Spirit. When the heavens declare His glory and the firmament sheweth forth His handiwork, when day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night declareth knowledge—all this is mediation : but the perfect mediator is—I use the language of Scripture—‘the Man Christ Jesus,’ to all who like himself are—again I use the language of Scripture—‘partakers of the Divine nature’—the Mediator, who revealed God by being like to God, to whom the Spirit that speaks in our spirits bears witness in that which he said of himself, that ‘whatsoever things he seeth the Father do, these things doeth the Son likewise.’ These are the attitudes of

receptiveness, of waiting to renew our life, in which as his brethren the Son places us towards the Father ; and whatever spiritual knowledge, in the progressions of all the ages, may come to souls who thus filially live with God, and study God in all His ways, in all His laws, in all His inspirations, that, though it has not yet come to light, we regard as belonging to the inexhaustible riches of God in Christ, a portion of the inheritance that is awaiting us as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

5. And the rewards of such a life are in the life itself, and cannot be conceived apart from it. The rewards of love are in love ; the rewards of knowledge are in knowledge : the rewards of piety are in the fellowship of God. What blessed days are reserved for the Church of Christ, when the whole Church shall stand fast in this liberty wherewith Christ hath made it free, and take no yoke but his upon it, to love and study and serve the Father in the spirit of the Son !

*The Church of God's Building, 1867.*

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## VI.

### THE STEADFAST SPIRIT OPEN TO NEW TRUTH.

I DO not know what the future of Christianity may be. I am aware of the foolishness of expectation that the Churches are to take our image : I know the poverty of spiritual imagination in which,

wherever it appears, this dull complacency has its rise: those who regard their own Church as the best conceivable, necessarily take it as the universal type; and without a creed, and nominally adjuring creeds, we may thus become as much self-idolators as others, with eyes turned away from the Church of the future and the more glorious fulfilment of the promised reign of God. If *we* are not free from this judicial blindness, a blindness which comes on all who judge others, and compare themselves with others, instead of for ever looking upwards to the light—and far be it from me to say that we are free from it—it is at least a blindness which finds no encouragement in, and from which we ought to be preserved by, our first principles. Other Churches fall into it legitimately: with them Revelation is a Book to be interpreted, and when the interpretation is obtained the Revelation is closed. They avowedly, therefore, erect standards that are never to be departed from: but we, if practically we ever fall into this voluntary blindness, are self-condemned. Our Church is built on another foundation. With us the Bible is the wonderful means God has provided, by the help of which we attain to a living communion with Himself and with His Son; and whatever that communion may impart to dutiful and filial souls through all the earthly ages, is part of the grace and light which Jesus Christ has opened to those who will live by his life, and walk in his way, and partake with him of the Spirit of Truth.

So long as we suffer no man to say anything authoritatively of Jesus Christ, save so far as we have the witness of the Holy Spirit in us to what he says,—so long as we will suffer *any* man to teach us authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ, if he can awaken in us a sense of God's Spirit confirming what he teaches,—we can never be made ashamed, nor confuted, nor removed from the rock on which our Church is built, the Rock of Christ, the Rock of Peter, '*Flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but the Spirit of my Father,*' by any new light coming into the world which God in His infinite grace may disclose to the worshippers in spirit and in truth. Our foundation is true and right even though much, or all, of what we have raised upon it should have to be superseded by better things—and in accepting these better things we shall shift no ground and lose no aspect of our life; we shall only be settled more worthily on our avowed foundation, nearer to the Spirit on whom alone we wait for our eternal growth. Nothing can disturb us here. Nothing in the boundless sphere of Theology coming suddenly to the light can shake any interest of ours. It can bless us; it cannot hurt us, it cannot trouble us. We have placed ourselves in voluntary subjection to no human error or imperfection. We have in the divine warfare of Truth given no hostages to fortune. To whomsoever God gives a victory, on which side soever His Truth may show itself, no pledge dear to us is in

any danger. There are no obligations, no bonds, no vows, no prescriptions, no signatures under our hands, no implied engagements,—no, not a vested interest to the value of as much as one hair of our heads, to hold us back from going forth at once to welcome any new light with which God shall bless His Church. And this is not because we are loose—not because we are settled on no foundation—not because we have anchorage nowhere and are swept by every wind of doctrine—but because our foundation is the spiritual rock on which Christ built His Church, that rock where alone in the spiritual world we touch real ground, the Communion of God with Man. On that Rock we are open to every breathing of the Spirit: on that rock we are unshaken by the variable winds of human doctrine.

*The Witness of the Spirit, 1863.*

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## VII.

### UNITY OF SPIRIT.

THE contrast in temper and in method between a Church that aims at unity of spirit, and a Church that aims at uniformity of opinion, carries us to the deepest principles of the Christian life. The one is always dropping salutary truths: the other is always denouncing what she takes for dangerous errors. The one is only anxious for the

state of the affections, their purity, mercy, and sensibility; the other is always dismayed and troubled by the varieties and irregularities of religious habit, worship, and thought. The one lets fall a heavenly seed into the soul, and is satisfied if it takes root and grows: the other is not satisfied whilst anything else appears above the soil, though it has no natural decay, and must be torn forth with living roots out of the bleeding heart. The one cares only for the leaven that is working in our nature: the other cares only for exact conformity to some given pattern. The one is a teacher and a fertilizer: the other is a disputer and a formalist.

Christ was emphatically a teacher. He never disputed. He dropped truths which, if they took root, would quietly supplant error. He was not afraid of errors, if only healing truths and fertile affections could be introduced along with them, side by side. He solved all the controversies of his times, not by giving judgment between them, but by the development of some comprehensive principle that underlay and embraced them both, and reconciled the disputants in one wider view; as when the controversy about the legitimacy of the Temple drew from him the solution, God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth, for such are the worshippers the Father seeks.

That the controversies of our times are conducted in another spirit—that our Churches trust less, for their stability and protection, to the instill-

ing of love and truth than to the forcible exclusion of error, must, so far, be taken as evidence against them—instructive signs of a weakness that through self-distrust grows violent.

I hope that the lesson of this time,<sup>1</sup> so far as we can insinuate and instil it, will be in the direction of that true and primitive Protestantism which seeks salvation through the heart's trust in a holy and regenerating love ; which asks only to bring God and His revelations into any real communication with the human soul ; which sets aside the debateable letter of all creeds, to enthrone the indubitable spirit of Christ ; which deposes *all* pretensions to authority or infallibility, as alike evil and dangerous ; which substitutes an attainable unity of affection for an unattainable and undesirable uniformity of thought ; and, believing that truth is soonest found when left to shine by its own light, and that error is least noxious and most transitory when the liberty both to proclaim and to question it is unlimited, leaves the agitation of opinion free, in the faith that man's spirit has a natural alliance with God's truth, and that as the good seed grows and fills the soil, every plant which our heavenly Father has not planted must necessarily *perish* from around it. Therefore, 'Let them alone.'

*Ecclesiastical Pretensions, 1850.*

<sup>1</sup> 1850, when an out-cry had been raised because the Pope had divided the country into territorial bishoprics, under Cardinal Wiseman as Archbishop of Westminster, thus re-establishing the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

## VIII.

## THE HERITAGE OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM.

THOUGH, thank God, we have much to learn, and may learn it too from those who are now coming freshly up to *our* points of view, and taking thence their first free gaze for themselves with the piercing vision of an unworn eye, we thank Him also, and that devoutly, that there are things which we have not to *unlearn*,—that we have hung around ourselves no human weights or blinds, in the shape of our own existing knowledge and conceptions, or of the knowledge and conceptions of our fathers, and called these human interpretations the eternal realities of heaven,—that cold, sterile, and poor as we may have been in our use of the inlets to God and Christ open to us, we have never been presumptuous towards those awful and inexhaustible beings—we have never defined the light of God, the perfectness of Christ—we have never withdrawn the souls of men from these divine persons themselves to any consecrated, sealed, and unchanging transcript of what they *are* and of what they *teach*,—that taking Christ as God's *Word* to us, the perfect man, the Father's purpose in us all, we have at least ever looked direct to the Father and the Son themselves, and spread no permanent veils, made up of thoughts and words of our own devising, between ourselves and the Heavenly lights.

So far we thank God, referring the honour not to ourselves but to our fathers, that, in this day of movement when all old things are to be freshly tried, in regard to the *method* of His teaching we have nothing to *unlearn*, however much to learn. We have never stereotyped our own thoughts or our fathers' thoughts, our own wisdom or our fathers' wisdom, and in the awful name and with the awful threatenings of Divine authority offered them to the world as eternal truth. It is a great matter to have looked direct to God and Christ as to living persons, to be able to receive afresh what their spirits may impart to our spirits, and not to approach them at all through the foreign medium of other men's theories about them.

Those who have reduced themselves to contemplate God, His character, His grace, His dealings with us, His action in us, only through the teachings of creeds, or within the conditions of being in harmony with the creeds, have no *personal* Knowledge or sense of God even when the creeds are true: they meet Him through no spiritual organ of their own: they do not even hear of Him, as by the Scriptures they might do, through the immediate report of those who *had* direct communication with Him: their approach to Him is not even through the *souls* of others, of Prophets, Apostles, and Christ, but through the speculative reason of later men who theorized on that which the spiritual witnesses had left us. A human system of theology is not only

a remove from direct intercourse with the living God himself, it is also a remove from those who *had* direct intercourse with Him; it is to substitute the limiting and shaping power of man's intellect for the free symbols and suggestions of God's inexhaustible Spirit; it is, to take the cardinal instance, to employ the logical *mind* on the interpretation of man's words, instead of directing the susceptible *soul* to the only adequate Image of God, which alone the Scriptures call the WORD of God, to the *Person* of Christ, the Word made flesh and dwelling amongst us.

However the religious world may relatively change around us, though the first should become last and the last first, though as with the Jews of old our place should be taken from us and our inheritance given to those who will bring forth the fruits thereof, though God must call in fresher eyes than ours to discern the moving soul, the unborn light, in familiar truths conventionally held, we shall yet rejoice with our whole hearts, if we are true, that the fountains we have guarded are at last unsealed and flowing—that what we dimly foretold, but could not worthily exhibit or illustrate, is, both within and beyond our boundaries, coming to its spiritual birth—that in the ripeness of time God has again visited His people, and in the light which floods His Church our candlestick sheds no longer a distinguishable ray. When this time comes, as it will come, if we are at all worthy of the office that God has given us, we

shall be full of devout joy in the Lord that our testimony is no longer needed, because it is fulfilled—that we are lost in the Catholic Church for which we pleaded, swallowed up in the glory we foresaw.

*The Witness of the Spirit, 1863.*

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## IX.

### THE WHOLE CHURCH MINISTERS.

THOUGH, with the important exception of books and libraries, which, useful and indispensable as they are, are yet of the nature of an apparatus, and form no part of the *living* teaching, of the sympathetic action proper to a church, the pulpit is the only internal provision for edification, yet it is far from true, even now, that the preacher is the only spiritual power in the public congregation, or that he alone is responsible for the life, or the death, that prevails in it. Each member is a minister in his place. His character, the range and order of his mind, sways in many untraceable ways the directions and efforts of the preacher. His silent, earnest presence supplies the most indispensable element of life, the open attestation of common wants, seekings and aspirations,—a fellowship in the mysterious whispers, secrets, and pointings of the spirit. One member of known spiritual energy, of known loftiness of heart and thought, elevates the standard of the whole body,—nay,

affects the feeling which every other member has in his own membership, the feeling of dignity, of responsibility, and of expectation. Spiritual force transpires and acts through many other, and more effectual because electric, ways, than through speech. He would be a bold and an ignorant man who could suppose that, without fearful danger to himself, he could undertake the guidance or instruction of a people among whom there were no individuals of powerful intelligence, of large and eager requirements, of strong spiritual vitality.

For the church lives on sympathy: sympathy is its food; and without sympathy it perishes. It perishes as a church, though it may survive externally in other characters, and for other purposes. I do not come to the church for knowledge: I can obtain that better elsewhere. I do not come to the church for the supply of anything that is peculiar to my own case, not even for the spiritual help which in my individual circumstances and formation I may most urgently need and crave: for all that is intimately and intensely personal I must look to the personal action of God's spirit, to Him who alone understands me, and in whom alone my weaknesses can be turned into strength. Public worship can never supply the place of our individual intercourse with God. But it gives us confidence to resort to it.

Public worship overlooks, and must overlook, all that is individual, and all that is peculiar to you or me. And this perhaps would be one of the advan-

tages of a grand and full liturgy, that it would save us from the stamp of an individual mind upon our common prayer. Only, there is no gain without its loss, or liability to loss, and we might lose the contagion of individual fire. But though public worship cannot pray from an individual's heart, or for an individual's wants, it gives him strength to pray for himself. It is the witness of humanity that he is under no delusions in believing that God has secret dealings with his spirit—it is the witness that *all* men feel what he feels ; that the most mysterious communication of his nature is nothing peculiar to him,—that *the foundation fact* of human nature is its living communion with an invisible God. It is the confidence which comes from the attestation that makes the church a priesthood and fellowship of souls,—and that marks insensibility to that attestation as partaking of the nature of inhumanity. One man may give to another the most essential spiritual help, simply by joining him in the acknowledgment that God is speaking to us—that God is working in us ! How else are we to have confidence in inward whisperings ? How else are we to meet the exceptional, but numerous cases of those who deny that they have in their nature any organ of communication with God ? How else are we to know that *we* are not the exceptional cases, when we assert the reality of such an organ, as the most certain of our experiences ? How else are we to have a Father ? How else are we to be

brethren? For we have no Father, and we are not brethren, if spiritual experiences are exceptional things. How else are we to believe that things on earth are but the pattern and shadows of things in heaven?

Now, for this ministry and priesthood, speech is not necessary; but the unison of souls is necessary; your presence is necessary; your fervour is necessary, and the contagion of your fervour communicating itself in ways that no man feels, but that God only understands. What is the power of all spoken words compared to the consciousness of common emotion? Perhaps the most sublime, the most real, worship is that of the Friends, in those moments when, though no word is spoken, it is yet felt that the Spirit is on the meeting.

I beseech you by this your ministry to aid the feebleness of all human speech, of all spiritual utterance,—to take what in itself would be poor, and cold, and bare into the warmth of your sympathies, and give it fulness and meaning. We come to the sanctuary to *be* a church, to bring together the elements of that mighty power—not to depend upon an individual, but to pour our souls into his, that perchance the collective flame may break from him as in a tongue of fire. I speak not of what *is*,—but of what we all long for,—of what perhaps might be, if we were all true members and never maimed the body. The presence of each individual is a confession, an exhortation, a hymn, a prayer. The

many a soul. rel. assurance  
High Church. Liturgy or other as aid  
to worship.

first condition of an effective church at all rests with *you*, and only representatively with your minister. And not the presence only, but the character of each of you, the secret habit of your thoughts, the marks of it on your features, on your movements, mysteriously sway us all.

For myself, I avow that in this place I have ever derived a support, an influence, a direction from minds with some of whom I have had little or no personal communication upon the subjects treated here, and whose spiritual sympathies, the order of their thoughts, the height and depth of their wants, have been conveyed to me, I do not know how. If this were not so, it would be useless for me to be here. If you did not aid me, it would be clear that I was not aiding you. You, and not I, are mainly essential to this church;—and, in so far as it is a church at all, what you give is far beyond what you get. So sensible am I of this, that if you should ever be insensible of it, if you should come to forget that this *is a church* built on sympathy and growing through fellowship, and should treat it as some other institution that, beyond the effects upon yourselves, was neither helped nor harmed by your presence or your absence, I should regard this breach of faith, this denial of the common life that draws us here, as the dissolution of our connection—I should consider that all reality had departed from us, whatever dreary forms we might continue to keep up.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

## X.

## FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH.

THE Christian Church was called from the beginning the Body of Christ, and in later language—which, perhaps, darkens what it meant to clear—the *mystical* Body of Christ. Such expressions contain the great truth that Christianity knows nothing of solitary religion; that no man is complete in himself, or was created for himself, or has himself for the end of his being; that in becoming a Christian he becomes a member of a community, of a community that is a *family*, alike related to their Father, alike needful to His purposes. Out of the family we are *nothing*, severed from the Spirit of our Father, severed from the fellowship of our brethren, striving to be something separate and independent in a universe upheld by one Spirit, a Spirit who suffers nothing to be accomplished except by *fellow-workers*. A man who thinks himself to be anything, apart from his co-operation with other men, has lost his place, like a stone that has fallen out of a building. Only be it remembered that we are *living* stones. We fit ourselves into our places, or we *take* the place that is given us, and we are *conscious* sharers in the spirit—and gradually, too, in the plan of the Master Builder.

For Christianity is not Socialism. It never loses the individual. It protects the individual, reverences the peculiar gift that is in him, and if it be neces-

sary for the growth of that peculiar gift, at times or for a time, even insulates the individual, but only that he may *ripen* his gift, and fit it for perfect work in the co-operation of God's workers. Indeed, it is this very difference of gifts, yet filled and guided by the same Spirit, and through that Spirit working towards a common end, that makes us a Body at all, each of us contributing the functions of a member or of a limb, and all of us together accomplishing a work which none of us separately could undertake,—all of us together furnishing out an aggregate human perfection to which separately none of us is competent. For in this last sense, too, we all together make but the Body of Christ. He was of no partial development. He was the full Image of God. He summed up humanity in himself. But now, even if that divine image is to be found anywhere on earth, it is in no one human individual, but in the scattered lights of the whole family of man—a grace here, and a gift there—not yet combined and reconciled in any one. Just as it required four Evangelists, at least, to save us from the partial colourings or impressions of individuals, and give adequate reflection of the full life of Christ, so does it require the mirrors of all faithful hearts turned for ever towards the Sun of Righteousness to catch the rays of the Divine Perfection,—as it will for ever require the co-operation of their gifts to work His plan.

It is in this conception of the Kingdom of God,

as inseparable from the family of God, as inseparable from the combined work of every member of that family, that we find the living meaning of those words whose misinterpretation has conferred a dead Primacy on St. Peter. 'Thou art Peter, and on this Rock will I build my Church'—that is, he was the first stone of the new building. He was the first to see the Divine Image in human nature—the first to recognize the Son of God in the form of a servant—the first to own the power of the Spiritual Reality beneath the mortal accidents of the outward conditions of our Lord. 'Flesh and blood have not revealed it to you, but the Spirit of my Father.' In the order of time he was the first of the new family that is for ever to gather in like members—of such members must the whole Church consist; of such *living* stones must the Temple of God be composed; and the spiritual Church, as an ordinary edifice, built upon this, not because it was different from, or more important than, any other stone, but because it was the first.

We are to build, then, this Temple of God—to fill up its symmetry with living stones, with our own spirit and our own life; and, since we exist not for ourselves but for the part assigned us, to take our allotted place in equal humility and equal joy, whether it be given us to make the outward beauty and glory, or the deep strength of the hidden stones of the building. In either place we are alike essential to the plan of the Divine Builder, and to the

perfection of the whole. In either place we have no glory of our own, but that of contributing with all our hearts to the glory of our God.

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It is only as you bring home to you its *fraternal* nature, it is only as you make a conscience of so regarding and so using it, that it can be of any peculiar or certain help to you; or that you can be of any help to it, or that delight and duty can come to mingle together in your connections with it. It is the instrument by which you strengthen your brother, and your brother strengthens you, in regard to that which God communicates, not collectively, but secretly and mysteriously to each—in regard to that life which is but too latent in us all, and of which we all require to be convinced, through the assurances of one another, that it is the stamp of the Almighty upon all, the one ineffaceable reality of our being. Is there a God? Is there a Holy Spirit that inspires us and that mourns over us? Is there a righteous Father who seeks and desires us, whatever we may do, and however we may stray—as in the cluster of parables, all intended to set forth the same first principle: the shepherd desired his sheep, and the woman her silver, and the man his son? Is there a Kingdom of Heaven of which we know that we are members, know it to our shame and to our hope, even when we are most earthly? Is there the impress of a Son of God upon and within the nature of us all, and do we know that

this is so, however through the sinful and wilful prominence of other elements in us the lineaments may not appear? Nothing short of these assurances could sustain the institution of the Church. Nothing short of these inward convictions could bring men together to bow down their hearts, and to lift up their eyes to Heaven. Yet I know not that the solitary spirit dare be confident of this. I know not that without the consenting witness of other men you or I could live in this faith. I believe that we could not. This, then, is the confidence that we get from one another, and that we get from your silent attestations better, perhaps, than from ten thousand words, for your words might fail to reveal what is in you, or might express what is not in you; but this is witness of your souls.

Enter into the spirit of this fellowship, understand this power of the Church, understand what you are to give and what you are to get, and the Church can never disappoint you. Everything else in connection with it may fail, but not this. If you want knowledge, this is not the place for you. If you want special advice in special circumstances, this is not the place for you. But if you want to hear the cry of the human heart after that without which it cannot do, after that without which it feels it has no real life, after that which would glorify all our cares and fears, and in glorifying deliver us from them—this may be the place for you. The preaching may be dead, the prayers formal, the hymns

vapid, the music inexpressive ; but if this symbol of the Church means anything to you, if it is a living symbol at all and not a dead letter, this at least cannot fail you—that your soul and your brethren's souls have gone up to Heaven together, that you have given and exchanged the pledges of a mystic fellowship, that you have avowed to one another that you are living in the faith, that severally and together you belong not to the world nor to the present but to the eternal household of God. To do this, whether silently or by speech matters not if it is done earnestly and from the heart, is in the highest sense to be ministers of religion, to make yourselves priests and prophets to your fellow-men.

But such a spirit as this will not insensibly be breathed from you, unless it is purposely fostered in you. A man communicates only what he is, and of what he has. There must be a consideration of times and seasons. The feelings of an occasion must gather and glow under the natural action of its proper stimulants,—of its circumstances, and their inner meanings, present in power before the thoughts. There is no use in coming here mechanically, or dropping in listlessly, with no purpose of giving and receiving—in quest of nothing, and with nothing to impart ; not understanding by what means, through what channels of sympathy, by what affinities and attractions we are to minister and to be ministered to. Unless through some natural preparation we are

already in a measure charged with all this, we are out of keeping with the time, as it were de-magnetized. We must place ourselves on the tracks of emotion. We must let meditation collect the forces of the soul. The heart must muse till the fire is ready to burn. Otherwise, the Church becomes a cold, unmeaning rite, and we lose the opportunity : life passes neither from us nor to us. Bring with you the spirit of the institution, the inner heart of the symbol, an honest feeling of its meaning, and in ways too fine to be detected you will both warm and be warmed, refresh and be refreshed. In this way only, will you never be disappointed here, for in this way only is there any communion of spirits, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, through the effectual working of every part, the whole body maketh increase, to the edifying of itself in love.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

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## XI.

### THE CHURCH ADMINISTERING CHARITY.

A CHRISTIAN Church is not a Society for the administration of material Charity. If it assumes that function prominently and systematically, it will gradually be debased. Everything it does in this way, should be of an incidental and occasional nature. It deals primarily in light for the soul, strength for the character, sympathy for the higher

affections,—not in alms for the body. But still there are incidental duties of this latter kind. A Church like an individual, cannot overlook the distress of whatever kind that is in immediate connection with itself; it cannot abstain from stretching forth its hand in occasional relief of a distress that is beyond itself, when that distress is clearly before it,—for a true Church is a communion, in bonds of sympathy with all mankind.

Out of these necessities arose the diaconate of the early Church, with which the Apostles refused to have anything to do. That was not their office. And my own conviction is, that the minister of religion should abstain from all part in administering the charity of the society to which he belongs. He may give information to those charged with this office,—but no pecuniary assistance should depend on his decision or pass through his hands. Any charity that he administers should be his own. This is the only way to shut the door against some very vile abuses.

But a Church must not neglect its duties because they are liable to abuse: it must find a safe way of discharging them. For it represents a Family, in which no member is suffered to be cast away, whether through misfortune, infirmity, or sin, without sympathy, succour, counsel, and opportunities repeatedly furnished of redeeming the past, and opening a new future. I have said elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> that one of its leading

<sup>1</sup> Charge at the Inauguration of the Rev. J. H. Hutton, 1849.

aspects is that of helpful intercourse amongst its own members in the various incidents to which man is liable—in weakness, sudden trial, difficult moral circumstances, or worldly want; and in the yet more delicate and arduous offices of personal and remedial application to known corruption and sin. These are offices that are best discharged through individual influence; and the opportunities that social worship affords for forming ties of friendship, or of kindness, which may serve as a natural introduction to the exercise of such difficult privileges, ought to be specially studied and improved.

Everyone who establishes such moral relations towards another as enable him without offence to lay his hand in love on the sorrow or the weakness of a fellow-man, is himself in the performance of the highest functions of a minister of Christ, and is the very salt of the church to which he belongs, preserving it for its most vital uses. Whoever turns to such account the intercourses of a fellow-worshipper is strengthening the bonds of holy sentiment and affection which give to the weak and the needy the sense of having a spiritual home.

But though such wants may best be supplied by individual sympathy, to make secure provision for such cases, I cannot but think that our churches ought to have some new office or diaconate, to which those of their members who are in critical moral circumstances might have a recognized right of application for support, counsel, and wise direction. The agency

of the minister would not always meet these cases, even though, unassisted, he was able to cope with them ; for often a moral perplexity, and threatened ruin to character and condition, will arise out of difficult circumstances, to which only those who have some command over practical resources can apply an efficient remedy ; when what is needed is not so much guidance or inward force, as a sphere of action, a career, or the removal of a temporary burden. Our deacons should be the most experienced amongst us, having large hearts tempered by wisdom. I would not have such a diaconate *make proffer* of its services, nor have funds in hand to administer ; but to exist as a Board to be applied to, ready to advise and help when need should be. The existence of such functions within a Church, would go far to realize the conception before the world, and the feelings within itself,—of a Brotherhood in Christ.

Such functions would undoubtedly require great wisdom, and severest precautions against abuse. It must not be open to any unprincipled man to feed his sloth or his vices on the charity of others, by claiming membership in a Christian Church. This would lead to some of the most odious forms of human helplessness, in which religion is a base pretence, and the whole man becomes a profane and hideous lie. There is no viler form of man, than the race that hang on the charity of Churches. But the Quakers knew how to overcome this difficulty ;

and if the spirit of the best days of that noble body was in all our Churches we should find it no more impossible than the early Friends found it, so to organize and rule our societies that no worthless man should make a revenue of his voluntary weakness or hypocrisy.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

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## XII.

### THE OFFICE OF THE PREACHER.

I HAVE, during my absence from it, been a close student of the power of the pulpit,—not in this country only, but wherever opportunity served, under all the varieties of national utterance, of the spirit and form of religious thought. Abroad I have sought out the efficacy of preaching, and the secret of the sway of worship, perhaps as diligently as others have sought museums and theatres. By far the largest part of my time, given to external observation, was spent in churches. And, as the first condition of fruitful hearing, never once have I listened to prayer or preaching with a critical direction of mind, beyond what was necessitated by the desire to possess myself, if so I could, of the mystery of their power. I have ever yielded myself without reserve, nay, ever with a forward reaching and desire, that God by the strength and soaring of

another's spirit would enlarge my nature, and lift me nearer to Himself.

Without this desire, without this attitude of soul, why do any of us ever come to public worship? Why approach rite, preacher, or liturgy, if you do not wish them to take possession of you and carry you away? To seek helps to devotion, and yet use those helps in suspicion and distrust, is really to cut the wings on which you try to fly. The soul, in such a mood, can never rise at all; it is simply self-intrenched, standing on its guard, questioning the right or power of foreign impulse or influence to bear it heavenwards. But such influences and impulses endure no questioning: the moment you question them you have lost them, and are left alone with yourself. The spirit that folds its wings to analyse the air on which it floats, falls to the earth like lead. Of course we are not asked to give a blind confidence, still less to trust against experience, or try to rise upon an element that will not bear us. But we are required to be consistent, not to put ourselves out of sympathy with our own objects; and, when desiring the rapture of prayer or inspiration, to approach whatever means we use, not with doubt and question, but with faith, love and hope,—at least until they fail us.

Nothing will serve you here, if you do not confide in it: not the truest inspiration that God ever breathed into the inward soul, nor the loveliest symbol of Himself that He ever imprinted on

creation's face. Criticize them, and you have dispelled them. They are not for your logic, but for sensibility and faith,—and if, in these directions, all things are possible to him who believeth, nothing is possible to him who doubts,—for doubt, whether the doubt be right or wrong, is the attitude not of a soaring spirit, but of a self-centred mind. The doubter lingers with himself. In no spirit, then, of reserve or holding back, but in strong reverence and desire, have I sought an insight into the power of preaching, wherever I could hear that it had any power.

The result is in two convictions which, unhappily, conflict with one another:—first of the unsatisfactory estimate of pulpit influence, of lay appreciation of it, and, secondly, that notwithstanding such unsatisfactory condition, in the pulpit, at the present day, must be found the main arm, the essential strength and weapon of the Christian ministry,—that if powerless here, it is powerful nowhere. And when I speak thus of the condition of a pulpit influence I am not guilty of the presumption of taking my own judgment as a universal measure. There were those for whom I had no measure, to whom it was my duty and my delight simply to commit myself: but in some cases it would be a mere pretence not to judge, where to judge and to condemn must be the instinct of every simple heart—unless it could be conceived that such 'popular preaching' was the artless religious expression of any mind,—in which

case it would be no more right to bear hard upon it than upon any other natural infirmity. But what I mean in relation to the pulpit is, that genuine power, and extent of influence, seem to exist in no just proportions to each other.

And when I speak of power in the pulpit, what kind of power is in my thought? The power of unaffected simplicity, the power of freshness, of earnest feeling coming visibly out of a living spring; the power of deep, searching, loving words, clear as the utterances of a child, but inexhaustible as the heart of Christ; the power of a large spiritual experience, to which the things of the soul are as palpable as the things of sense,—in a word, the touch of nature, the unmistakable power of reality, dealing calmly with what it knows. This demonstration of the spirit and of power is the rarest of the gifts of God—the power of speaking lucidly and simply of those relations and aspects of our nature which connect us with the Infinite—with the infinite of Goodness, the infinite of Wisdom, the infinite of Holiness, the infinite of Blessedness, the infinite of Time and of Being. No one can wonder that this is a rare power, for the experiences which are its subject-matter exist only as sentiments, inter-communions of the human spirit with the divine, not definable, and varying in measure and quality with the spiritual habits and capacity of each. And especially is it not strange that this power should be rare in the pulpit, where it is most wanted, and chiefly

should be found. For it must be spontaneous ; it will not bear forcing ; if strained beyond the natural desire of expression it becomes rhetoric and unreal. With spiritual laymen who are placed under no such pressure, under no temptations to unreal speech, but who have had large and deep religious experiences, I should chiefly expect this power to be found—not perhaps in copious measures, but compact, clear, and intense.

The demands of the pulpit are in excess of the unforced supply. I am not surprised that when St. John in his old age was carried into the church at Ephesus, all that he said to them from time to time was, ‘ Little children, love one another.’ This was all that was within his heart to say without straining, and he felt that it was enough and inexhaustible. No man *wants* to discourse so often, or so elaborately, of spiritual things, as the exigencies of our modern churches require. Hence the supply becomes, or is always in danger of becoming, in a large measure artificial ; hence the speculative intellect, with its endless and insoluble questions, intrudes into the domain of things spiritual ; hence the glitter of rhetoric ; hence the sounding brass and cymbals. Oratory takes the place of spiritual utterance, and eloquence falls into all the human weaknesses which are the ordinary temptations of that art, but which are painful beyond ordinary measure when found in connection with religion. Of course the pulpit alone is not to blame for this ;

neither for the unhealthy pressure; nor for the vicious consequence of a superficial and inflated rhetoric. The pulpit is a representative institution, and 'like people like priest' is a proverb that had its origin even in sacerdotal times, when the priest might have seemed more sheltered from popular influences.

The universal demand of all uncultivated, and of many cultivated, minds is for an excitement upon easy terms—an excitement produced for them by another, without toil or strain of mind or soul to them—an excitement, too, which, as it is an excitement of *the religious feelings*, they can pass upon themselves for a spiritual act and sacrifice without further cost. There is something unspeakably degrading about a man being used, like an actor on a stage, turning a congregation from a church for edification into an audience for pastime, for the gratification of emotions called religious that yet are to perish in the using, which begin to subside with the long-drawn breath that releases the not fatigued mind, and that have their remaining traces smoothed away by the friendly talk of acquaintances in the aisles, or by the kindly inquiries of the porch. And yet for all but men of the rarest powers, or of a still more rare directness and simplicity of soul, the alternative is this, or obscurity and neglect. I have not courage to tell here, even by way of illustration, the things that I have heard from the most popular pulpit in England—a pulpit pressed

upon and surrounded by vast crowds, not of the uneducated, but of all ranks of English society. And on the other hand, I am not competent to speak the words instinct with spiritual life, the truths struggling into imperfect utterance because of their greatness and simplicity, as with agony of soul, which on the same day I heard from a pulpit surrounded only by a vast solitude, spoken to a few straggling listeners. From the crowd I retired, feeling that the power which had such splendid success was too mean for use. From the solitude I retired, feeling that the power I had experienced was of the highest that God can give, though it only reached a soul here and there.

Yet, whatever may be the thought of the present condition of the pulpit, or of the expectations of those who come to it, and however a man may have to make his election between extent and quality of influence, it never was more true than it is at this hour that the preaching of the Word is the distinctive weapon of the minister of religion—that the pulpit is the seat of his power—that there first, and to the subordination of whatever would interfere, should all the energies that God has given him settle and be spent. To use it worthily, to make it powerful, is the *special* work of his life. If the Word of God is not as a two-edged sword in his hands, severing the thoughts of the heart in twain, dividing the evil from the good and carrying the piercings of light into the innermost soul, he is a cumberer of the

ground ; he is holding the place which some other should occupy ; he is doing nothing *specific* in the world. For, happily, out of the pulpit there is nothing in the present day to distinguish the minister of religion from the lay member of society. With the exception of what relates to the pulpit, and to the layman's special calling, there is no longer any characteristic difference between their tastes, studies, duties, and employments. I thank God that this is so. It marks a vast progress towards the idea of a Christian Church.

As regards education, the alleviation of human suffering, the enterprises of practical benevolence, the reform of the guilty, the elevation of the toiling, the equalisation of lot through the diffusion of sympathy and brotherhood,—in relation to all these we stand on common ground, acknowledging one responsibility, and one commission ; and if there is a difference, it is a difference that comes not from our callings in life, but from our attributes as men, or from the accidents of opportunity and power. I disavow an obligation in regard to any one of these interests, beyond the measure of that which belongs to every one who hears me. I do so not to make my own obligations less : I shall not complain, however high you may rate it ; only I shall not place yours lower than you place mine. If it be said that my calling gives larger time and opportunity, after all the special claims upon it have been answered,—*I know that not to be the case*,—but if so, it would be

an accident not affecting the point in question, that we are all, irrespective of our callings, under exactly the same social, human, and Christian obligations, according to the measure of ability.

And, in point of fact, the schemes of philanthropy that characterize this age are not in the hands of the professional servants of religion. That they are not so is among the best signs of the times. It will not long be in doubt who are the Christian Church, once it is manifest who are the Christian workers. St. Paul would have surely deemed it a subversion, not of Christianity only, but of Judaism too, that practical benevolence, and works of love, were ecclesiastical matters and belonging to the priests and the Levites; and a greater than Paul, in a memorable parable, made a terrible exposure of that assumption. The recognition of equal and universal obligation is the foundation-stone of the kingdom of God,—and for the first time it has been duly acknowledged in these latter days.

The ministers of religion do not stand apart from these interests: they take their share,—but certainly have no pre-eminence, unless it be in the way of instigation or suggestion. As workers, as practical Christians, as members of one another, doing their several parts to honour the whole body of Christ, the ministers of religion, to-day, can claim no superiority over the rest of their brethren,—nay, rather with the layman, as is natural, is deposited the larger measure of ability to execute

the projects to which the preacher points,—a command over resources, experience of life, homely tact to handle difficulties, a knowledge of where men are wanted, and the power to place them there, and, above all, vigorous, healthy human-heartedness and common sense. It must not be supposed that I say this to the disparagement of the ministers of religion—on the contrary, that Christian love is no matter of class, that they and others now run together in this race, that the interest is universal,—this would be their highest praise, the noblest vindication of their great office, and of the manner in which they have borne themselves in it—if it could be regarded as in any way *their* work, and not rather God's only.

But this being so, what distinctive place—what distinctive function—is left for the minister of religion? The pulpit, and preaching of the Word: the realization in silence and prayer of what Christ meant by the kingdom of God on earth, and the presentation of it to the consciences and affections of men, so as to engage their souls and bodies; the perpetual elevation before your eyes of the tabernacle in the heavens. To this he is set apart—not set apart from the Christian life and work that is common to us all—but, after we have discharged that together, set apart to the peculiar office of prophetic teaching—as the merchant to commerce, the physician to medicine, the lawyer to law. I do not mean that he has a class monopoly of religious

teaching such as a lawyer or a physician has, in their own walks. I mean that if he does not excel in this, he is nowhere at all as distinct from any other man—that what he professes to supply is the administration of the Word, the truth, the light, the life of God, borne to the innermost consciences of men—that society looks to him specially for this, and this only,—and that if he has not this to give, his occupation is gone, his office forfeited. For this is his office: by *words*, for he has no other distinctive means, to unveil the face of Christ in the presence of the common world: by words, to take men into the fellowship of the Spirit of God.

Does anyone suppose that such words, words out of the secret place of the spirit, can come readily to the deepest, truest nature? If they do, I am no fit witness on this subject: they come slowly and with exhaustion, as droppings of blood. At all events, to speak as the oracles of God, for the sake of this is the institution of the pulpit; this or nothing, it contributes to the spiritual growth of the world; on this toil, prayer, duty, special work in life must centre,—and the minister of religion is free for nothing else whatever, that might deny success in this. It is a small matter to maintain my own consistency, if any should arraign it, happening to remember what I said when I last stood here,—that set and elaborate discourse is not the mightiest conductor of religious life. I say so still. The power of God walks abroad, in flesh and blood, acting and

speaking out of the occasions of our daily life, and its most quickening words of love and wisdom are not prepared addresses, but dropped in season at the touch of emergency, pressed out of experience, compassion, helpfulness, fellowship in suffering. But this highest power, and these highest opportunities of power, belong *to all*: and for the professional minister of religion no place is reserved but the pulpit. To be powerless there, is to fail in the only matter *that is exclusively in his hands*.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

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### XIII.

#### CRITICISM OF SERMONS.

NOTHING so utterly or rapidly lets down the mind from sentiment to self, from heaven to earth, from spiritual interests to mere common and intellectual matters as any critical direction of the thoughts. I say nothing so utterly or rapidly lowers the tone of mind as this,—because it is the only means that respectable people of ungenial natures can use for that purpose; they cannot scoff or scorn; but they can criticize,—and *that* dissipates feeling just as effectually. Reverence is gone. Sympathy is gone. The receptive attitude, the listening mood, the glad yielding of the spirit to emotion are all broken up. Another class of faculties is called into exercise. We are no longer receiving, nor desiring

to receive, but keeping keen watch at all the doors of ingress, questioning the right of anything to pass. Then nothing will pass, nothing at least nobler than ourselves ; for as long as we are sitting in judgment, and trying every offered guest by our own measure, we vulgarize our hospitality, and will never entertain angels unawares.

Now, I say this not for the sake of protecting the Preacher from criticism. I say it not for his sake at all ; but for your sakes, that you may not destroy every chance of finding here the only thing you come to seek, and besides do a great injury to the reverence and simplicity of your own nature. The preacher will always be open to criticism. No one can know that more fully than he does. No one will know better where his weakness lies ; few perhaps will know it so well. He could supply a critique upon what was wanting in his unfoldings or his applications of Religion—in his feeble wielding of that awful sword of the Word of God which is too mighty for his hand, which would go deeper than any clever remarks upon the obvious imperfections that lie upon the surface. He will always to those that are not willing to let a spark kindle their own fires, to those who meet him not with the sympathies of their souls, but with the sharp side of their intellects,—be more or less shallow, dim-sighted, limited in experience and conception, and imperfect in utterance ; seeing but a little way, and able to express only a very little of what he sees,—and, moreover, if he is

real and simple, and not artificial or made up, he will very often be unequal even to himself. If he is not a fool, he will know that this is a necessity, a necessity of the greatness of his office and the weakness of himself, and he will submit himself to it frankly and humbly. And yet he will not doubt that the poorest symbols of God's presence with us, the feeblest efforts to bring forth the eternal meanings that hide in common things, if they are only honestly given, will ever be welcome and precious to those who are honestly seeking, and whose open organs of reception when they approach God, and all who speak of God, are neither the critical intellect, nor yet the narrow gauge of prudential common-sense, but the affections, the conscience, and the spirit.

Abstain, then, from that which must check the flow of your own sympathies. Abstain from that ungenial talk about sermons, in which it is utterly forgotten that the sermon has only a *religious* interest, and in which the criticism, as it turns upon matters intellectual or external, is for the most part completely superficial. Do not encourage this habit of mind in yourselves,—and do not suffer others to tempt you into it against your inclination. For the temptations of this kind that are thrown in one's path really amount to an offence. Opinions are asked in a manner most direct and unseemly, so that it becomes impossible to be at once courteous to the questioner, and chastened and reserved towards yourself, the preacher, and his sacred theme. There is something

both intrusive and irreverent in questions of this description, and you will often find to your deep sorrow, and with some feeling of repulsion from the tempter, that you have been betrayed into utterly ungenial observations, and had your critical propensities reluctantly and most unprofitably excited. This is a sort of minor sacrilege ; it is to take away the good seed that may have been sown in our hearts, to reduce the tone of thought,—to strip our feelings of any sacredness that was gathering upon them, to rob the Sunday, the Sunday worship, and the Sunday exhortation of the power or place they might have had, if we had left them to their silent efforts upon the heart ; instead of suffering them to be brought up for judgment or discussion at an inferior bar. I certainly was not aware until lately of the extent of this evil.

You will understand that I deprecate only that criticism which does not proceed from a religious interest, which is unsympathising, hard, or merely intellectual, in the point it raises,—and that, on the other hand, I have nothing to say against, but every thing to say for, an earnest and thorough estimation, an estimation that uses the right weights and measures, whose bearings are religious and spiritual, whether it consists in genial appreciation, or in genial dissent. To deprecate judgment of this kind would be the extreme of weakness,—and useless as weak. What I would utterly condemn, and intreat you to abstain from, not for the preacher's sake, but

for yours, is the treating of religious things from points of view that are not religious. This is as false in judgment, as rude a violation of sympathy, as if when your whole soul was filled to overflowing with the tenderness and sacred majesty of some great painter's ideal, a terrible bystander was to direct your attention to something that was wrong in the drawing. Be it so—but at that moment, and before that picture, you care nothing for drawing, if it is to rob you of the elevation of your spirit.

I do not mean that any severity of judgment is applied to sermons, for I think for the most part that is very far from being the case, and that a much higher standard would be a great benefit to us all,—but that we speak of them as if our business with them was to pronounce an opinion upon them, to tell our neighbours what we thought of them, instead of to lay up in our hearts whatever of self-knowledge they may have awakened, whatever of Christian endeavour they may have stirred. If they were regarded as appeals to our conscience, or as the interchange of brotherly sympathy upon the deepest things of our nature, we should be slow to treat them in this way. Recall the ordinary observations on the sermon, as acquaintances meet in the porch. The most common perhaps is, 'It was a good sermon,' for there is no unwillingness to be what is called '*pleased*' with a sermon. A good sermon: and pleased with a sermon! You cannot talk of anything in this way without lowering its

value, without insensibly altering your natural relations towards it. Is a good sermon one that you are to judge,—or one that judges you? What is a good sermon? Something that lays the Law of God upon a man's conscience, that brings the Spirit of God into a man's soul, that makes a man start under the keen sense of unsuspected obligations, and feel to the quick that his very peace lies in toils that he shrinks from, and in efforts that he shuns as sacrifices. I do not know that a 'good sermon' should 'please' anyone,—or that it should leave him in a condition to express an easy opinion upon it,—but rather that it should give him an opinion of himself on which he would not desire to say anything, and introduce some thoughts and purposes into his heart, on which the deeper they went the more would he be disposed to be silent, just then.

I would pray you to abstain from a habit of mind that really goes far to neutralize public worship and public preaching; or to turn our food into poison. I especially would ask this, for *their* sakes, of the young, of the clever and the keen-witted: older men will have learned a deeper seriousness, that there is another measure for these things. The preacher is helpless if you are not genial, at least desiring to be genial. And it would greatly strengthen the inner feeling that brings and unites us here, if for the time no lighter feelings were suffered to hold their ordinary interchange and

commerce—if ordinary friendliness claimed no passing, but often jarring, notice—if it was understood that without offence objectless conversation might properly be avoided—if none of those things were said which *are* said, not for any interest we are then feeling in them, but because something is expected to be said, as though we were in haste to relax the bent bow, and reduce the pitch of the mind. As some meditation before worship, so some silence and retirement after it, would be more in the spirit of the time, less likely to dissipate what had gathered on the soul.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

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#### XIV.

##### THE PREACHER'S BURDEN.

**S**PEECH is too largely the instrument of the Minister of Religion. The demand for the *expression* of religious thoughts and feelings is incessant. A man's life ceases to be one of free action, and becomes one of official services. There is not one moment in which the cloud of this impending necessity does not hang fearfully over the heart of a conscientious man, darkening as the hour approaches. But expression is a sacred thing; its power is in its truth; it comes free only out of deep and rich experiences; it is forced at the peril of a man's soul; it is wrung out of him only at the price

of the spoiling of his nature. Perhaps the rarest gift that God confers upon a man is the power of interesting, quickening, or elevating other men by the utterance of his thoughts, especially upon subjects spiritual and eternal, when they touch no living passion. Yet here is a profession built upon this power, presuming upon the possession of it as if it was the common faculty of ordinary men. It is only thoughtlessness, or deep ignorance of human nature, or the levity that delights to contrast the promise of a sacred profession with its poor performance, that could express surprise or scorn at the result.

When the world complains of the failure and the feebleness of preaching, little does it know what it has exacted; and, for my own part, my feeling is only one of increasing wonder that it is so genuine and so powerful as it is. In all other cases where speech is the instrument that works great effects, great interests are felt to be at stake, matters on which men are livingly moved. The speaker has not to give a form and body to the invisible substance of impalpable thought. Where business, where passion, where justice or oppression, where human life and happiness are involved;—the speaker has already upon his side the might of realities, I mean of realities that are *seen* to be such, and to those concerned his coldest words touch nerves that thrill. The preacher indeed has great interests, but not therefore matters on which men are already greatly interested, and seldom or never the passionate

urgency of a real occasion. It cannot be supposed that it is natural to any man to desire to speak twice weekly at great length, and for the instruction of other men, upon themes that exhaust a man's nature to approach even in contemplation, God, and Eternity, and human aspiration and duty, and the bridge of death.

It is not *to think* of these things that is unnatural or an effort, but to think of them with the view of one's thoughts passing into words, that they may raise to spring-tides the living waters that lie latent in the cells of other men's souls. It is this, to have to think and feel *with a view to others*, that so often stops thought itself, breaks its living flow, and curdles and taints emotion by the reflection of how it is to be used. The desire for the utterance of a man's spirit in any deep directions is intermittent, and even to the richest nature, and most sympathising heart, can only be occasional, whereas the profession of a minister of religion, as it is exercised amongst us, assumes that the desire is perennial, and the faculty always ready. It is strange to think that all the words that Christ ever spoke, the words that ever since have fed the world, and can never be exhausted because they came out of the heart of his life, would not reach in length to two or three of our sermons. The whole of the New Testament would not serve the exigencies of a modern preacher for six weeks. There must be something wrong in this.

No profession can safely be built upon the sup-

position that such a power can be natural or possible to ordinary men, and only ordinary men can be looked for as the mass of any profession. And so they become wearisome expositors instead of living springs,—framers of sentences instead of mighty Energies of God. Men of rare faculty can meet these demands out of their exuberant fulness, without having to press upon the springs of their nature till they break: men of a saintly heart, still rarer than the richest faculty, can meet them out of the sufficiency of love: men of merely systematic minds, and classified emotions, can meet them with their fixed methods and their shaped formularies, which as they think contain all religious truth and healing, and have only to be *applied* to the various cases of human need: men of a low standard will live content with the perfunctory discharge of any duties whatever, and waste themselves with no sighs of impotent desire—but those who cannot speak except out of a living impulse, and who will not speak beyond the reality of present feeling, to whom yet God has not given the vision and the faculty that are ever ready, with whom their deepest feelings collect but slowly in their hearts, and have to be mused over long before the fire breaks forth—whose tears lie not too near their eyes, nor their words too near their lips,—are compelled often to be silent altogether, or else with shame, and mistrust, and a sense of failure, itself enfeebling and humiliating, to have recourse to something that did once come from a living spring.

I believe that all rich speech is the fruit of a rich life : I believe that without this, the tongues of men, or of angels, are in imminent danger of becoming sounding brass and tinkling cymbals : I believe that the more a man has to speak on spiritual things, the more he ought to live not in thoughts and self-raised emotions, but in works, and sacrifices, and communion of spirit with all his fellows, if he would not make himself hollow and a lie. I believe that the amount of expression required from ministers of religion is excessive and disproportionate,—that it shuts out a large experience,—that it trenches upon truth of spirit and freedom of life,—and that the results which are deplored, the feeble fruits that have now become the measure of expectation, are only natural and inevitable.—*Farewell Sermon, 1854.*

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## XV.

## THE PREACHER'S STRENGTH.

IT may have happened to many of us to be conscious of gaining most, of delighting most, in spiritual intercourse with some one person who had no other pre-eminence whatever, but in whom the reality of 'the hidden man of the heart' could not be concealed. An ambassador for God, who in every council represents the invisible, and makes the unseen kingdom a present and dominant power, may be without what is called genius, without creative

imagination, without philosophic faculty, without exact learning or extensive knowledge ; but with truth and righteousness he cannot speak in that Name without a vocation, without at least the consciousness of a divine communion that masters and moves himself, without a faith mightier than sight, for sight is temporal, in the eternal realities that feed his own being. He has to speak what he does know—out of experiences which, instead of *taking* its tone and colour, *gives* the aim, the word of command, to outward life : he must not be the repeater of any man's lessons ; with a mind printed like manufactured goods ; the receiver, digester, and expositor of all that can be taught in class-rooms about theological doctrines and their history. His subject is Religion, and of that he knows nothing but from the living scriptures for ever written afresh by the living Spirit.

Not that he is independent of the human help by which we stand where now we are ; not that he is taken out of the line of the prophets, and without aid from history and development begins at the beginning, and receives everything from above at first hand. He might in that way receive enough to keep his own soul alive, but not to teach or lead mankind, to sum up the prophets and Christ in his own growth, as though the gradual progress of the past was no providential necessity. Still, all these have done nothing effectual for us until we have the witness within ourselves, and Christ himself helps us su-

premely only when he places us in his own position, leads us to the Father, and leaves us alone with God. Without a knowledge of the history of the spiritual life of man, all that may now be written on one soul could not possibly be there, yet only when the Divine signatures are within ourselves do the prophets and Christ become not dead but alive, quickening and interpreting our being, their light passing to us as when face answers to face. It is this *experience*, the self-verifying nature of divine truth, which gives the prophets their courage, and enables the youngest of them, if he does not exceed his commission and lose himself in unreal pretensions, to deliver his message with a modest and a blameless confidence.

When I was at college, the Professor of Moral Philosophy, Dr. John Young, a man of bold and stimulating eloquence, used to say to his class, 'Gentlemen, some of you will be preachers,—whatever you find in yourselves, fling it at them!' And if this is for the most part a safe rule as regards a morbid self-knowledge, a knowledge of the seeds and the mystery of evil, with a far higher confidence must we rely on every movement of good in us as the normal inspiration of our nature—on every suggestion, prompting, and intrusion of the Perfect, which we know not to be of our own imagination, as not ours exclusively, though ours in the most absolute sense, but words spoken to us by the Parent Spirit whose voice the deafest of His children may come to hear.

If any one thinks this is *unreliable*, as not positive knowledge, and possibly only subjective dreams, I only say at present that as long as he so thinks the Christian pulpit is not *his* place ; the ministry of religion, the function of the prophet, the witnessing to realities, cannot be his vocation. We may differ with our fellow-Christians about the theology, the systematising into a body of doctrine, of the religious facts of experience and of history which are the data we have to deal with, but the first and essential thing is that we should be fully possessed of the spiritual realities to which the theories have to be adjusted. A man might as well write a treatise on the passions and affections who never felt an emotion, as talk of theology without having his heart moved with the life of God. The questions to be solved are not within his apprehension ; their constituent elements are to him things unknown ; and no one will ever speak a profitable or reconciling word on the deep unclosed questions of atonement, or depravity, or conversion, or the everlasting forfeitures of sin, who does not know how these questions take their rise out of his own personal relations to God, who has not trembled at the contrasts of the intreating nearness of His grace, and of the awful distance of His righteousness. It is a knowledge of the fundamental facts of all our evil and of all our good, brought into consistent relation with a Parent Spirit and with a Kingdom of Heaven, which can alone save any class of theologians, on the one hand, from

being professional scribes and doctors of the law, living on empty traditions and speaking by rote ; or, on the other, from being a mere school of sentimentalists, without a growing nucleus of positive truth.

What *are* the fundamental beliefs, capable of being stated in a doctrinal form, and which as far as we can have a system of faith give it to us, is the great question that throws light over the whole field of comparative religion ; and it was when he who is the head of that religion which, as we believe, sums up and perfects all the rest, in that discourse which contains more of affirmative teaching about God than can be found anywhere else, laid his foundations, as in the Beatitudes, on the rock of inward knowledge, on that contact of the Holy Spirit with our spirits which alone makes real ground, that the people stood astonished at the irresistible power of his doctrine, and surrendered to the authority with which he taught.

*Visitor's Address, 1877.*

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## XVI.

### A LIVING TEACHER.

THE religious *sentiments* spring freshly in a pure heart, and *as* sentiments are never to be questioned ; but the intellectual forms they take, the

practical influence they exert, their condition of harmony with every fact and every reality of God in all departments of the Divine manifestation and law, depend upon two variables, which, thank God, have been steadily increasing, the mental culture and the spiritual freedom of each age. I should hold it as the most signal benefit in religion to be taught by a spirit that is as nearly as possible in what we mean by the prophetic condition of reception and utterance, to whom the things of God come from face-to-face transmission of Spirit and contemplation of Christ, with as little as possible of the intervening veils of a theology that must more or less be distorted and false,—instead of by a mind obliged to make its way to the Light through the thickets, and carrying the marks of the thorny passage, in wounds and mutilations, and references to past struggles that had better be forgotten. Blessed shall be the days when intellectual light and spiritual love will be received together and blend in the soul as perfect wholes — when we shall love God with all the *mind* as well as with all the heart and soul, and what He teaches through the spirit will have no conflict with what He teaches in history and in Nature. It is first in our religious blessedness that the poet's vision must be fulfilled :—

Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When Love is an unerring Light,  
And Joy its own security.

This will come from growing faith and growing knowledge, along with a devout confidence, of which no mind not pagan ought to be destitute, in the absolute unity of truth, the harmony of the manifestations of God—a harmony which it would be polytheism to doubt, even when and where we are least able to unfold it.

*The Church of God's Building, 1867.*

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## XVII.

### THE NEED OF SYMPATHY.

THE secret of spiritual power is spiritual sympathy, a sense of the spiritual life that is breathing all around us; and, as sympathy is personal, a contact with all its living centres within our range of experience from Him whom we know as its source through all that we have of real participation in the inward life of others, whether that participation comes to us kindling from admiration and love of what we discern, or comes to us appealing from perception of a brother's want and misery, for what we might supply. What direct knowledge have we of God except of a Person speaking to us, in promptings which are within our experience, though they transcend our attainments, mingling in our life with suggestions that are beyond our life? What real understanding have we of the men and women

with whom we are in daily intercourse, until we come to feel the informing spirit that moves and shapes them? What is the subject-matter of nearly all your theological studies but the *records* of spiritual life—a life that remains as dead to you, as uncommunicative, as monumental inscriptions in unknown tongues, until, re-animated by historical insight and human sympathy, it breathes and speaks again. Sympathy with spiritual life, in its various manifestations, as the source of theoretic insight in speculative theology, and as the source of practical power, of personal influence in administrative religion, of this I would speak as of the one thing needful—not as the one thing all-sufficient, but as the one thing indispensable.

*Visitor's Address, 1879.*

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## XVIII.

### THE OFFICE OF TRUE LEARNING.

IN nothing does a generous learning more delight than when it comes to the aid of our most common yet deepest wants, our most universal instincts, and subserves the work of God in the natural life of man. It is a genuine learning that, against the menaces and mutterings of masters in Israel, authorises us to live as we are moved by the Divine Spirit in our being; whilst, limited as

severally we are in range and insight, it extends to us the instructions of the past, not as standard rules but as helps, suggestions, warnings, enlargements, and supplements of life.

No man, no age, is as large as all humanity, and it is the office of learning to interpret the gifts, the graces, the achievements, the wanderings and mistakes of other times, and especially of the great men of all times, so as to enrich and fortify our lesser being through a familiarity with qualities and positions which our own experience could not supply. Learning is thus the best ally of the spiritual freedom wherewith God has made us free.

We are *children* of the All-perfect Spirit, and there are progressive growths of man's conceptions of God, of man's understanding of Christ; and a misdirected learning has been stereotyping the formulas of one or more of those stages as if they were absolute and final. A presumptuous erudition is occupied with the authoritative expression, as though men possessed in it the last perfection of religious knowledge; a true learning, by all the help that man can give to man, clears the mirror that is to receive, illumines the eye that is to see. It is a pretentious and arrogant learning that has so long been making God in the image of man; it is a modest and true learning that is more and more to help man to be in the image of God.

Learning, and the most legitimate exercise of our spiritual freedom, cannot be separated. Without

*learning* a man has only his own life and experience, without means of understanding them, not knowing his place and continuity, as though the past had never been. Without *freedom*, without a fresh spring and growth of conscious being, learning is but a bundle of traditions, tied together by some string of chronology or system—not the feeder, but the suppresser of life.

*Visitor's Address, 1868.*

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## XIX.

### THE POWER OF SYMPATHY.

NO genuine conviction of divine truth and reality is fully possessed or enjoyed until it is felt to flow into its universal relations, and it is plainly impossible to know the religious aspects of human life, or to apply 'the grace of Christ' to its occasions, without a tender sensibility, growing perfect through exercise, to the joys, sorrows, and affections of mankind, through their finest shades of feeling and of trial. How quickly we are conscious of the difference on our own moods, and, for the time, upon the flow of our capabilities, between a self-absorbed man who, without observation of the life that is around him, baffles courtesy itself, and, withholding its opportunity, makes even graciousness, as one who has missed his step, feel jarred and

awkward—and the fine temper which lifts us to its own level, with a raised self-respect, and a sense of life itself as increased in dignity and value. In this rich spiritual gift, source of the sweetest happiness and of the finest influence, we clearly can no more grow in gracious power without genial sympathy and unselfish insight into others, than physically we can feed upon our own tissues. We must be *in* the stream of human life if we are to be enriched by it, or to affect it ourselves.

And this is ever the problem of our being, to be in the current, and fed by it, but with a force and action of our own, 'in the world, but not of the world,' serving it, and served by it, but not its product. The power of a minister of religion is the virtue that goes from him consciously or unconsciously, and is mainly that of one who is in sympathy with the indications of human joy and sufferings, with an insight into their inner meanings and their transfiguring offices. In this way only we learn the springs of character. From delicate signs of feeling we know the inner being, and in an instant are admitted to 'the hidden man of the heart,' to the deepest beauty and the finest ministrations of life.

There are occasional moments in everyone's experience peculiarly rich in such instruction, when without speech or language we are strangely moved by some exquisite revelation of the mystery and the sacredness of existence. One such brief unspoken

drama vividly recurs to me. I perhaps ought not to attempt to convey to you a dialogue of natural language where a word, defining what cannot be defined, would have broken the spell, for I may fail, through want of skill, to make you witness of so simple a scene of genuine feeling. I can only say that it was better to me than many sermons, in giving a sense of the subtle enchantment of sympathy, of its wonderful capabilities of expression, and of its part in the blessedness of life. I was in the same railway carriage with a Prussian officer and his bride. They were a noble-looking couple, young but mature, with that appearance of full life in every faculty, perhaps more rarely seen with us, which charms with the fascination of a richer existence. She was returning to her old home for the first time after her marriage. As we neared familiar scenes her excitement was visible, the eager desire in her eyes approaching to agitation, when suddenly she drew back, and, with a look of perfect rest, laid her hand in his, and so remained until we stopped amidst her waiting kindred. Nor did he speak : but it was written on his face as finely as on her own that he had followed every movement of her heart, and knew all that she meant to convey. The capabilities of happiness there indicated, the power of sympathy to combine so much of complex fidelity and emotion, was something to thank God for, with a vivid teaching of how the most universal relations of human life may continually be ennobled and en-

riched, lifted into a spiritual sphere, by thoughtful and unselfish sensibility.

Gentlemen, I am not wandering from the most practical suggestions. In teaching the fulfilment of Christian duty, of the graciousness of Christ, it will be part of your highest functions to unveil the beauty of life. You will have to preach more than not to kill, and not to steal, and not to bear false witness, and not to covet our neighbour's goods—I mean in the ordinary sense, for the *spirit* of the commandment is exceeding broad, and, in fact, whosoever is blind and blunt to these finer sympathies and claims, *is* killing, and defrauding, and giving false testimony against nature, wounding, and trampling, and outraging through every region of what is most our life.

*Visitor's Address, 1879.*

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## XX.

### THE CHURCH A WITNESS FOR GOD.

EVERY Christian Church is a witness for God. It exists to proclaim that He has a Kingdom in the world, and that He is seeking to draw all men into it. The strength of that testimony will depend upon the measure in which we make ourselves His representatives on the earth—in which we charge ourselves with the care of interests that are dear to

His providence—in which we strive to shew His Spirit all-present and all-penetrating,—so that places else desolate and forsaken shall be surprised by some token that His love and care are there. Remember what Christianity is : a Kingdom of Righteousness, in which every member is called to be a Son, and every son the image of the King.

Remember, in the first vigour of its faith, how true Christianity was to the demands of that idea : and out of your nearness to the heart of Christ replenish the lost freshness. It did, as its natural work, without boasting and without strangeness, what until then had been without example on the earth. It charged one with the care of another ; one country with the care of another ; one race with the care of another : it sent the Jew, who indeed was a Jew no more but a man in Christ Jesus, to look for the soul of the Gentile. It was the first sense of the Fatherhood of God, the identity of nature and of destiny, that wrought these miracles of brotherhood. Hence the missionary spirit in all its forms. Since Christ spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan, in reply to the question ‘ Who is my brother ? ’—our brother is the suffering man, else have we blotted out our own claim to have a Father in the Heavens.

We cannot on our own behalf claim that, the just consequences of which as regards others we are not willing to allow. Paul felt the claim of those on whom his eyes had never rested—whose claim could come to him only through the sensibilities of his soul.

And the claim, be it spiritual or be it physical, must be strengthened when the need is at our own door—when its plaint is in our ears or its degradation in our sight—when the sad or the foul antithesis to a Kingdom of Heaven, to its righteousness, or to its peace, is within our own streets, and perhaps an incident of our own prosperity. Paul thanked his God for the experiences of sorrow which gave him an understanding of sorrow, and taught him how to apply to other hearts the grace that had proved sufficient for his own.

The question then for a Church is, how does it sustain this representative character? How is it witnessing for God? How many have had experience of His love through its ministries, who unaided, might not have reached to it through their own souls, or their own lots? 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,' and now it is only Christian nature to be full of heavenly grace: unnatural to be without it. In how many directions, towards how many kinds of malady, are we putting forth the healing touch of the brotherly hand of Jesus? How many choked-up channels, channels of the heart, channels of the conscience, channels of the intellect, channels of feeling, taste and sensibility, are we opening for the action of God?

We may pride ourselves on our care of ourselves—on how prudently we have kept our own respectability, and secured our own small interests when the world is sinning or crashing around us:

but one question, 'Where is thy Brother?' may alter all that. Better to be ship-wrecked on the sea of generous adventure, than to settle on our lees, and stagnate in *self*-keeping. And a society, just as much as an individual, may live for itself. A corporation may be intensely selfish—nay, it may concentrate selfishness in a way that no unsupported individual would have the courage to do. A society may call itself religious, and think only of itself, and provide only for itself, and assemble for the promotion of its own private interests, and in no sense whatever be a Christian Church, a representative of God, charging itself with the interests of His providence in the community around, in the midst of which it should be stationed as a city set on a hill.

*The Preacher and the Church, 1857.*

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## XXI.

### MEMBERS OF ONE BODY.

IT is the Christian view of man that society is constituted as it is, not to separate us from each other, but to aid us in combining together with our 'diversities of gifts' and 'diversities of operations' in a way that would not be possible if every man was a duplicate of his fellow; that we are more precious to one another, and ought to be more closely connected by our individual varieties of stations and

of powers than any uniformity could make us ; that we are one body and members in particular, all working for a common good, all necessary to the health and life of each and of the whole, all flourishing or all perishing together, ' so that the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee, nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you,—but whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' This is the Christian view of a Community, a Church, and a Brotherhood ; but what loftiness of aim, what unworldly wisdom, must unite and draw together the hearts of us all before we lose the mere earthly view of the comparative places wherein God's Hand sets us, as living stones in this spiritual Temple.

To all men, high or low, the special blessedness of life is in the inward peace with which God rewards loving and diligent service. It comes not as wages ; it brings no foolish dream of merit ; its fountains are in the divine Love alone ; yet is it the strength of every heart, an atmosphere of beneficence and worth which good men breathe. Without it no life is honoured ; with it no life is degraded. There comes to every thoughtful man—and who is thoughtless for ever ?—a desire to rescue his existence from uselessness and contempt, a craving for something to justify us to ourselves for living on this earth, a desire to be included among the instruments of God, to feel that we too are a part of His Providence,

not living for ourselves only, but with some connections with the universal good. Without this, existence is emptied of everything that gives it dignity or sweetness—a dead weight and weariness which no conscious heart can bear. The highest and the lowest alike require this sentiment, and to a devout heart it is all-sufficient to release them from a despised condition, and to give them the use and the enjoyment of themselves.

What can ennoble that man's life, or give it a value in his eyes, who is ministered unto, but does not minister? Or what can cheer and consecrate poor and abject forms of existence, if no spiritual insight opens for the toiling and depressed, the true sources of respect and peace, and sheds upon their useful and honourable lives its serene and unearthly illumination? 'If any man would be great among you,' said the mightiest of the workers of God, 'let him be the servant of all.' When the servant of all perceives that therein is true greatness, there will be a sentiment in the hearts of men that will take the sting from outward evils, that will banish the envies, the jealousies, the restless eagerness for external prosperity, the neglect of inward quiet, that now, out of the spiritual blindness, produce the unhallowed wretchedness of the world.

*Spiritual Blindness and Social Disruption, 1849.*

## XXII.

THE MINISTER TO THE POOR MEDIATES BETWEEN  
CLASS AND CLASS.

I N this age of machinery, of great cities, the classes that are widely separated in circumstance shave no natural communication with each other that is readily available for spiritual counsel and sympathy. New moral life comes only from the direct action of heart on heart, of spirit on spirit, and when overwhelming numbers make this individual communion a physical impossibility the effort is abandoned in despair, even where the employer is impressed with his responsibility, and desires to have moral relations with his people. And how many are the cases in which there is no fixed employer and no natural clientship of any kind which directs the steps of a friend and a counsellor to the poor man's door?

It is in these circumstances that the Ministry to the Poor has become an imperative demand of the times. It is a special agency for keeping alive those fraternal sentiments between class and class, which the nature of our present civilization has largely deprived of their more spontaneous methods of expression. It brings messages of sympathy from those who cannot come in their own persons. And in expressing the love of *man* it represents the love of *God*, and so takes both bitterness and impiety

out of many hearts, sanctifying afflictions which would generate only fierceness and despair if borne in dreadful loneliness without earthly pity or heavenly hope. As one of your own missionaries has expressed it in your last report, this ministry comes to many afflicted and depressed as a testimony to Providence itself; and seeing that they are not forgotten by society, they are more ready to believe that they are not forgotten by their God. This is indeed to have a noble mission—a true ministry of reconciliation—to be the representative of the divine Grace—witnesses for the Almighty—awakeners of faith in the sure mercies of God.

*Spiritual Blindness and Social Disruption, 1849.*

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## XXIII.

### DUTY TO THE NEGLECTED POOR.

THAT adaptation to the poor, the adaptation of the physician to the sick, which the Christ asserted as richest evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, must in every age be an evidence, and I believe, *the* evidence, of the quantity of the Spirit of Christ which that age possesses. It is the condition of their poor that determines the morality of a people. Our physical refinement, indeed, is to be estimated from an examination of the highest and most luxurious classes, but our religion,

our spirit of humanity, from an examination of *the lowest*. What we are intellectually, mechanically, materially, is to be seen in what is called our civilization, which means the progress we have made in making art and nature minister to our physical comforts ; but what we are as *Christians*, that is, as brethren of men, and children of one great Father, is to be seen in what those who live by the people and wield the influences of society suffer the people *morally* to be. The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of human brotherhood, of mental and moral equality, recognizing the aptitude of all to be inwardly happy and blessed, and consequently the condition which the high suffer in the low, the influences which the powerful exert upon the weak, those that have upon those that have not, the moral standing and grade which the rich determine for the poor, the instructed for the uninstructed, measures the degree in which Christ is in the midst of us in the power and operation of his Spirit, for it measures the degree in which we live as brethren, and strive to equalize our Father's gifts of mind.

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The evil we leave to God to remedy, we have no faith that God *will* remedy, for we know that God wills nothing of moral good, except through man's co-operation. There is nothing of moral evil which has not also its moral remedy, and to find *that* and

apply it, is our mission upon earth, and our preparation for heaven. The faith that humanity and God asks from us, is a faith that will justify its own confidence, and that trusting it and Him, will work for the one, and beneath the eye of the other, doubting neither. The faith that worketh by love will, by the result, prove that it was not deceived. Neither humanity nor God will fail it. Then leave not this evil to God, unless you wish to show that you distrust God. *Work* to wipe it away, unless you deem that all such labour is in vain in the Lord, and that God does not wish it wiped away. Do as Christ did when he looked on the multitudes and had compassion, because they were as sheep having no shepherd. Pray and do. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest; and then immediately after *choose* your labourers as he chose his Apostles, and *send* them forth. This was Christ's faith in God. He prayed and strove. He asked for labourers, and he set himself to find them.

*Ministry to the Poor, 1835.*

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## XXIV.

### THE SENSE OF NEED TO BE AWAKENED.

WHY do not the poor come of their own accord to the preaching of the gospel? Because they do not appreciate and understand their own

moral nature. Because the wants of the mind have not assumed in them the forms of desires and appetencies. Because the love of knowledge is not in them a thirst; and a draught of truth a refreshment; and the thought of God a luxury to the soul. Is this so rare a thing as to be peculiar to the poor; or is there anything so privileged in their lot and condition that they should be *more* religious than others, and without instruction, without a teacher sent to them, be able to draw from the hard rock of poverty the streams of living water?

The poor do not come to the preaching of the gospel, because before they will go in quest of it they must feel a want of it—a desire of the spiritual affections for spiritual nourishment, an appetite of the soul for truth, which the mind must experience before it will seek the means of its gratification. *Exclusion* from blessings is not the way to make our nature crave for them. The less we know, the less we care to know. The soul conforms to its condition. You must give it a taste of something better, before it desires to rise. The most degraded are always the most contented with their lot, for to know little is to have few desires. Leave them to themselves and you leave them to live and die as they are. You cannot expect men to do what they have no motive for doing; to seek a morality and a piety, of the beauty of which they have no inward perception, and for which their hearts do not hunger. You must excite the moral appetite, before

it will crave and stimulate to exertion, and perform its spiritual function.

If the poor will not come to the gospel, the gospel must be brought to the poor. Christ did not tarry in his beneficence, till men of their own accord desired what was good. *He made the desire*, by going about doing it.

*Ministry to the Poor, 1835.*

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## XXV.

### WHAT IS REQUIRED OF A MINISTER TO THE POOR.

THE poor are not moved by tame modes of action or appeal. The formal common-places of morality, and economy, and good management, are thrown away upon them. The dead maxims of wisdom come not near their apprehension—have no chance of mingling with their living impulses. Their acquired wisdom—their practical fruits of experience are often inconceivably small, less than it would be thought possible for the most barren life to fail of leaving with them as an inevitable deposit. In this absence of acquired knowledge, and of the rich teachings of experience, a minister to the poor is often thrown upon his own inmost resources. He has human nature before him, bare of everything but its original and inseparable susceptibilities, some of which are blunt, almost dead,

through disuse,—and never have had a word of direct appeal addressed to them from any living voice.

A common-place man, who had not a word to say to a human being except through the medium of the current ideas of order, and decency, and propriety, and was brought to a dead pause when these made no impression, would be utterly useless in such a position. He has no aids from circumstances, no aids from education, no aids from that artificial morality and acquired perception of right which is imbibed from habit and guides so large a part of life, and if he cannot act directly upon a human heart by the unaided force of his own nature, spirit upon spirit by native energy, he cannot cease too soon from his vain attempts in this service.

Intensely alive must be the spirit that has power to reach, and restore the functions of a lethargic conscience, long unconscious even of its own existence, and fast sinking into moral death. The dead are not raised by the dead. Greater works than outward miracles,—works of recovery, revived spiritual animation, the refreshment of hopes, and affections, and prayers, and tears of love within neglected hearts that had seemed parched and hardened by the barrenness of life—these works, which Christ said were greater than his own miracles, can be wrought only by a living soul strong in its own love, armed from within, trusting mainly to its own forces, full of the Spirit of God and of power.

*On the death of John Johns, 1847.*

## XXVI.

## HOW TO REACH THE POOR.

IF you are to convey Christian truth into the hearts of the poor really and effectually, it must be through their moral wants and feelings. And how are you to find out these, except by coming into close contact with *individual* minds; preaching, not to congregations, but from house to house; dealing not in *general* statements, which it requires some exercise of mind to bring to bear on the circumstances of our own experience, but carefully searching out the very feeling you are to address, the individual lesson you are to give, the individual irritation you are to soothe, the individual spring of better feeling you are to cleanse from its gathered evil, that it may send up the waters of pure and purifying emotion, and become a fountain of regeneration in the soul. Thus must you preach the gospel to the poor; and in order to preach it thus you must have a Special Ministry for the poor. Not through their intellects are they yet prepared to take in the Christianity you preach. Therefore you must give it to them through their *affections*, but to have access to their affections you must meet them in their homes, acquaint yourselves with their moral experience, and look through their eyes into their hearts.

*Ministry to the Poor, 1835.*

## XXVII.

## FREE PROPHETIC UTTERANCE.

OUR ideas of the administration of religion are too much shut up within Congregational conditions. To make men religious, we think only of organizing them into such societies as this. That may be the end, but it will not be the beginning. Men may be quite open to spiritual influences, if they are brought to bear upon them, who are quite averse to fixed forms and periodical habits, and all deliberate seeking of that which yet they would welcome if it came. There is something of superstition in our feeling, as if religion consisted in the supporting of churches or in church-membership; for it will often consist in a feeling to which this will seem too much of a limitation; and at all events, it is clear that it is not in this way that the working classes are, in the first place, to be made religious, for you cannot organize what does not exist.

I have seen in Rome a Monk of the preaching Order, emerge into the sunlight from one of the numerous churches in the neighbourhood of the Capitol, into whose open doors as you look from the outer brilliance the depth of the shadow seems dark as night, and with a few attendants bearing an elevated cross pass through the dense populations of the narrow streets that surround the Forum. First one, and then another follow him, until by the time

he has reached the Coliseum a vast crowd is in his train. There, in the centre of the mighty amphitheatre, with thousands upon thousands grouped around him, he drops the priest and the theologian, and speaks with that direct earnestness of spiritual things which never reaches its height except when the speaker is in the presence of the naked majesty of men, and is looking into faces on which are depicted only the stern and solemn realities of life and nature,—and when the throngs break up they carry away a spiritual impression, a new sentiment of God and of existence, which they never would have received but for the living invitation that called them there. Some substitute for this agency we must find in this country, for the great class that have now no living relations with religion: it is plain that we cannot *begin* with church-membership.

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We must allow a greater freedom to the manner in which religious influence is to be brought home to the people. And the preaching by which this is to be effected, will apply the power that proceeds from the living Persons of our Faith, from the personal God, and the personal Christ, presented as living Beings to the souls of men; in contradistinction to any schemes of doctrine respecting these persons as channels of holy influence. A living God—a divine Son, the Man that was in God's idea when He made our human nature, livingly mani-

fested to His children in an earthly life—a Holy Spirit, tied to no conditions or notions of men, for ever stimulating and for ever presenting the Goodness towards which it stimulates, and therefore for ever forgiving if for ever inciting—the infinite possibilities of glory and of peace to every one whose spirit has thus access to the living Sources of Perfection—and Christ himself as the greatest of the results of that access,—this is our religion, the doctrine by which we must win the world.

Take the example of Christ's own preaching ; it is all personal : the Conscience of Man and the Spirit of God, these two brought together. 'The common people heard him gladly,'—because he alone in his day stepped out of the Church system of his day, out of routine and dogma and recognised ways of salvation, and taught not as the scribes, not as the priests, the doctors, and the theologians, but with a living authority. He alone could speak with power, because with him alone the Holy Spirit touched his own spirit ; and when he spoke of religion he dealt with God Himself, and not with some doctrine about God.

And this is ever the danger of all organised Churches, to lose the living intercourse with the Nature that is above us whilst systematizing our own thoughts ; to forget under the temptation to human speculation, and the pressure of much speaking, that the only healthy exercise of religion is that which brings the supernatural into real action on the

natural, and recognises it as the personal influence of God. Christ said—‘Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free’: but Christ’s Truth was *reality*, the spiritual God Himself, as distinguished from any human doctrine of God, or scheme of salvation. If these real spiritual experiences are preserved, when the time comes for theorizing on their inner experience, men may then connect them with whatever theory is the fittest for, because the truest *to them*—provided only they do not shut out the infinite Light, the living power of it, and barricade their nature against the God who is above it.

*A Religion, not a Theology, 1859.*

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## XXVIII.

### A MISSIONARY CHURCH.

WE may satisfy ourselves of this truth,—that a contracted sphere of operation implies a languid centre, an unenterprising soul—that a Church that has not faith enough to set its heart, and stake its fortunes, on great deeds of love, will never provide a religion for human nature,—will never be acknowledged by any large number of men as their nursing mother, their highest encourager on earth of the endeavours which God’s Spirit prompts—and that when it has served its temporary purpose,

it must pass away, and yield its place to some nobler representative of Christ. Any Church must perish, and deserves to perish, that does not occupy the hearts of its disciples with great projects. It dies because it does not ennoble men's lives, nor employ their energies, nor feed the highest of all appetites, the hunger and thirst of the soul for service and sacrifice.

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Are we to wait until the fitting faculty [for missionary enterprise] appears? No; the fitting faculty never will appear, until the effort of duty calls it into life; power is generated by intention and by zeal; and gifts come forth on the field where they are exercised. If we will prepare the sacrifice, God will send the fire.

*A Religion, not a Theology, 1859.*



SERMONS AND ADDRESS.



THE CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE  
IN CHRIST JESUS : ONE FOLD  
AND ONE SHEPHERD.<sup>1</sup>

*' Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.'*  
—JOHN X. 16.

IF Religion ought to unite men, and ought not to divide and separate, how shall we of *this* fold justify our own existence as a Church? What is our relation to the one Shepherd—to Christianity and to its competing representatives? Are we rivals or are we reconcilers? Unity is the essential characteristic of the members of Christ's Body, as it is the essential fruit of God's Spirit. Yet disunion is the most marked characteristic of the religious world. The sects do not love one another—do not acknowledge that they are complements to each other

<sup>1</sup> A Sermon preached in Renshaw Street Chapel, Liverpool, August 12th, 1866; containing parts of a Sermon preached before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, May 22nd, 1850, and published at the request of their committee.

for mutual fulness and enrichment. Their distinctions are not to themselves the diversities which the same Spirit worketh, which blend with and mellow one another to furnish out perfection, but mutually conflicting and exclusive. He that is saved by sacraments and he that is saved by creeds, reciprocally regard the same thing as vital and as fatal, while both disown him to whom the Spirit of Christ is the only essential. Under the same Leader, irreconcilable factions start aside from one another. In the midst of this strange discord, most strange as growing out of a universal revelation from God which yet each claims, as peculiarly his own, what is *our* position? Are we only *one* of the tongues of this religious Babel, insisting like all the rest that our dialect is the universal language of Christianity, the exclusive idiom of Heaven? Are we but one among the sects, waiting till all mankind shall be constrained to accept our speculative views—offering to the Churches no healing principle, no heavenly spirit that underlies all differences—but standing proudly on our own ground, with the claim that towards *us* the world must move, around *us* as a centre the world must gather? Do we hold to Christianity only the relation which one of the systems of ancient philosophy held to the universe? Are we only the disciples of a school, and not simply the children of a Father whom we know and the servants of a Master whom we love? Is our notional theology the mightiest power of our religion, and the girdle of our brotherhood?

It may be that we have a truer theology. We, at least, think so. But still, if we built the Christian Church upon that individual belief of ours, and not upon the universal Rock of spiritual consciousness which each Christian soul supplies, an inward recognition of Christ as the Image of our Father, the common aim and aspiration of us all, the culmination of our Humanity, I do not see how we should differ fundamentally from the other Churches, of whom we complain that they introduce false centres of spiritual association—false as centres, as conditions of communion, even if they were true as doctrines,—that they seek not a spiritual unity—a unity of Love, but a notional uniformity. Do *we* agree with the rest of the churches, that Christianity is an Orthodoxy; and is our only difference as to *what* the Orthodoxy is? No; this is not our position, and that it is not is evident from this—that we never doubt that God and Christ can touch by their living and personal power the souls of those, all whose religious theories appear to us conspicuously false—that we could not entertain the thought of cutting off from the Christian body those who, in their intellectual conceptions of Christianity, have scarcely one view in common with us, without hearing the solemn warning of the Master reproachfully sounding through our hearts, ‘Ye know not what spirit ye are of.’

And if this be so, then our religious sympathies establish that Christian Fellowship does not stand on the narrow basis of intellectual agreement; that

our Church is wider than our Creed, that it is as wide as our Christian Love, and includes all those whom any spiritual faith, any desire and sighing of the affections after their real ends, any recognition of the soul, draws into vital personal union with God and Christ, with God as imaged in Christ. Who would maintain that *moral* unity—unity of heart and aim, of life and sacrifice, was impossible between two good men whose *philosophy* of morals was wide as the poles asunder? And why should Christian Unity be impossible between those who agree as to what they love, and whom and how they should serve, and acknowledge the actual attraction of the Son of God in conferring this love by revealing its objects—revealing them, not theoretically, for as to that they differ, but personally to the full gaze of the soul?

I think it is impossible for anyone to rise to a moment's true fellowship with God and Christ without the desire and prayer issuing from his heart, that he may never represent to others any mere individuality of his own as a *condition* of that Divine union—that he may never interpose anything of his own as a screen between the receiving spirit and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. Who has not felt the fear that our religious Institutions, our Churches, our preachings, from the mere fact that they must take definite shape in speech and writing, necessarily harden in permanently imperfect forms and methods of conception

which would have proved transient or progressive, if not thus arrested and organised—that thus, we come to give durable subsistence, as if they were standard values, to expressions of mind that ought to mark only the stages of growth—that we make it difficult to grow at all, when, though not formally pledged to past states, we are yet practically hemmed in by their fixed monuments and symbols—and that the free Spirit of God, acting as it ever does in kindred currents on the highest souls, might long since have brought the Christian world to a substantial harmony, if no religious organizations, no rigidly-defined churches, no professional ministers of religion, each exalting their own peculiarity into something universal and essential, had ever been established?

I do not say this as a fear to be yielded to, or that there are not great gains of life which without religious organizations we could not have possessed; but this I would say, that the man on whom this fear does not rest—the fear of narrowing spiritual Christianity by *his* intellectual interpretation of it—is sure to be a most unfit exponent of Christ as a living Energy of God for drawing the souls of His children, the desires and aims of their hearts, into sympathy with His own. For what would be the perfect result of Christ's action upon us? Simply that we should love as God loves, and desire as God desires, and have all the directions of our will in currents parallel to His.

I do not for a moment forget that every noble mind exists under a necessity of finding an entire harmony of being—and that, when Christ told us *to love God*, he told us that it must not be with any one thin fibre of thought or sentiment, but in the united power of everything in us that is derived from Him—with mind, and heart, and soul, and all the strength of will passing from affections and desires into life and action. No man can have his intellectual life and his religious life permanently disunited or unreconciled without the degradation of each, without imbecility or slavery to himself. If our Religion is not both spirit and truth, heat and light, the fuel of our whole nature, reason and affection, in a mighty fire, it is at some point a falsehood and a contradiction, and at all points feeble, wanting in that fulness of *all* the parts which is the only proper balance of our being;—no master principle as yet reconciles and rules us; our faculties, like the horses in Plato's chariot of the soul, draw different ways. A harmony between his reason and his faith, his judgment and his heart, the law of his thought and the objects and devotions of his soul, every man is bound to desire, and as far as possible to maintain, under penalty of spiritual decay. Indifference to Truth is the gross caricature of Liberality into which men of light minds, often calling themselves practical, are apt to fall. I do not *know* what the Truth is on any great controverted subject; but I know that Truth is to see things as they really are, as God sees

them—and that to profess indifference to that, if anyone could profess it and understand what was meant, would be a shocking and dangerous impiety. To build the Universal Church of Christ on our own speculative opinions is the very spirit of Antichrist: to be indifferent to Truth, indifferent as to whether we think as God thinks, and see as God sees, would betray a disjointed nature, into whose thin weakness no deep enthusiasm of a spiritual order could ever strike its roots.

We maintain our spiritual fellowship with all who are drawn towards God by recognizing and loving Christ as His Image—but we maintain it in combination with absolute allegiance to our own individual convictions, as long as they are our convictions,—and with an acknowledgment of the necessity of ever seeking to have in our religion the full truth, reality and direction of all our being—the mighty flame of various elements, of affection and of thought, in which consenting nature glows together. We will not suffer the one essential and universal attribute of spiritual Love to injure the reverence for individual conviction which to the individual is an essential honesty: neither will we suffer our own individual conceptions of Truth to separate us from the Church, from the communion and brotherhood of any in whom that spiritual Love exists.

We do not then, stand as a sect among the sects with an offer, like their own, of a truer theology as

the only Christian medium through which God will act upon men's souls. We stand among the sects with a spirit that would embrace them all: we ask them to cleave to personal realities of trust and worship, of aspiration and affection—to *personal* attachments of the soul—attachments to God and Christ as living persons, the inspirer and the pattern of our life;—not, indeed, to abandon theory, for that is impossible; but not to make their theories indispensable to other men's religious life and sensibility, to keep them mainly for their own internal satisfaction, for such reconciliation of their whole nature, of faith and reason *in them*, as to themselves they may be able to afford. At the same time, we have a Christian theology, as all thinking men who desire completeness must have, and Christian faithfulness and fraternity compel us to make a tender of this theology to the world, not as essential to individual salvation, but as having this recommendation, that it presents a basis on which Christ's vision of a Universal Church might have its fulfilment, and at least saves Christians from the necessity of excommunicating others who desire to love the Lord Jesus as fervently as themselves. We, because of our sympathy with Christian life and affections wherever they appear, have this great blessing from God, that we can embrace within our fellowship those who, because of their theologies, cannot so embrace us; and so we tender our theology to our brethren, not in the spirit of a sect or for the glory of a theory,

but that amid whatever diversities of opinion, the free conditions of a universal spiritual Unity may come into existence, of one Fold and of one Shepherd for us all.

We cannot, as a Christian Church desiring to keep the Fold as wide as Christ would have it, range ourselves upon the side of the orthodox, not because we deny their membership in Christ's Church, but because *they* have to deny the membership of others who claim to be of the Fold, not because what is called orthodoxy is *untrue*, but because it is *exclusive*, and has another standard for Christian life than Christian love—another bond of brotherhood than unity of heart. Christianity is to us simply an intense realism—the divine life of man revealed in a man. It is all in the *person* of the Saviour : and all gospels and records are precious only as they enable us to come into real intercourse with the living Word, with him in whom God's Will was manifested in the flesh. To us Christianity is God's image in Christ ; man perfected in Christ ; the essence of our Immortality, of our celestial life shown in Christ, who returned to earth with the affections that had made it heavenly, and awoke Mary to recognition by the dear tone of his voice. Now to this extent of what we have called Christian realism all Christians agree ;—so far all are one with *us*, and *we* add nothing more ;—but every one, without injury to Christ's brethren or offence to spiritual liberty, is free to add what he pleases, if he only

feels this to be enough for vital union, as branches of the Vine whose roots of life are hid with Christ in God.

And thus we have as our Christianity, not doctrines for our belief, but persons for our faith—our God imaged in His holy Child, in the only spiritual nature except His own that is known to us, and divine life in a man:—not concepts of the intellect, but living beings—not ideas for the mind, but persons made apprehensible with whom the soul can enter into ever-growing relations. Surely it was in this way that God conceived the revelation of Himself: ‘This is my beloved *Son*, in whom I am well pleased.’ Surely it was in this way that Christ claimed to be the Religion of mankind: ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ ‘If the Son (the spirit of sonship) shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’ Surely it was in this way that Paul understood the salvation of the gospel: ‘God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—and we beholding in that glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of our God.’

I shall not be supposed to deny that this revelation has for each individual a more or less definite intellectual interpretation under the forms of doctrines. What I mean is, that its vital force does not issue out of, and is not limited to, that

interpretation; that its peculiar power as a religion consists simply in giving us God and Christ as real Persons, with whom our souls hold personal relations. For example—and I cannot exhibit my meaning more lucidly or more unanswerably—what but this can account for the spreading fire of sympathy through all the Churches, as if suddenly a new sense had been given to the religious mind of England, excited by such a book as ‘*Ecce Homo*,’ a book remarkable only for the intense realism with which it apprehends and sets forth the human personality of Christ as the image of God and the perfection of Humanity? Here, from an unsuspected quarter, all matters of mere doctrine being avowedly held in abeyance, the man Christ Jesus is vividly presented, and is felt at once as the true Lord of our Humanity, the divinest reflection of God, by the immediate spiritual sensibility of all sects and parties. Apart from the question of its own merits or completeness, the possession which that book has taken of the religious consciousness of England as a true representation of real Christianity is the most encouraging fact, the most hopeful for unity and catholic issues, in the spiritual history of our time. That men should be free to yield to the critical considerations of such books as ‘*Essays and Reviews*,’ is a great good: that they should receive upon their souls the simple image of Christ and feel it to be the essence of religion, is something infinitely higher.

All other ground of unity shifts with the flying shadows of thought. Intellectual agreement is an impossibility. Listen to Christ's idea of religious unity: 'The glory Thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one as we are.' What was that glory but the sense of sonship—that we should all come consciously to draw, as he did, our spiritual life direct from God as our Father and our Limit? The Lord becomes our mediator, that is the conductor of God's Spirit to us, kindling us to the conscious knowledge of its constant workings in us, when the spiritual part of us, capable of divine impressions, is thrilled and exalted by the fulness of life in him. Then Christ can say to us what he said to the first spiritual believer: 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but the Spirit of my Father.' The personal relation of every soul to Christ as the image of the one God and Father of all, is the universal and sufficient element of Christian unity, for what unity more full than that the same love should be in all hearts, that the eyes of all should rest on the same living standard of perfected Humanity, on the same living mirror of God! Even with this bond of union, universally recognized as alone central and essential, various forms of religious societies, as of other societies, might still have to exist, determined by the affinities of our minor agreements; but such diversities need no more wound our spiritual unity than other inevitable social differences need wound our humanity

—for all the worship would be in the same spirit, and all the action towards the same end, even as brethren of one Lord of our humanity to bring the whole world to God through its participation of the mind of Christ His Son.

And this strong Christian realism, fastening its love on living persons, making nothing of speculative barriers, will alone be found powerful enough to make one Fold of many, or to draw *into* the Fold those who are now without. For the infidelity that prevails is mainly owing to that notional theology which presents no objective realities to the toiling, and has lost its traditional hold upon the thinking. The unbelief of this day is of two orders. that of the toiling who want a living God and a living Lord, and cannot find them in the mists of metaphysical theology; that of the thinking, who require an entire harmony of Being, and cannot find room for the mind and the knowledge of the nineteenth century within the creeds of the fourth. Christianity remaining the same in itself, why should its intellectual interpretation remain the same through all the ages, any more than the interpretation of Nature? The same God, the same Christ, the same universe continuing, why should not theology be as progressive as science, whilst the heart, the essence of religion, the love of God and goodness, remains for ever the same?

We surely have a Christianity to stay all such infidelity—a Christianity which cannot come into conflict with reason or growth, nor disgust and mock

the robust and tried natures who are seeking real supports, divine friends and helpers ; for it offers as essentials no shadows of speculation and no priestly charms, but the personal God and the living Christ for filial faith and brotherly sympathy and guidance—a Christianity which aims at developing, at educating, not at *altering*, the spiritual being which God has given us,—which comes to fulfil the law that is in our nature, the prophets that are in our souls.

What, then, do *we* more than others ? How do we apply ourselves to this *our* mission ? Have we felt the elevation and the responsibility of the peculiar place that God has desired to give us ? Have we made clear to the world the fundamental idea of Christ's Church ? Have we made it impossible to confuse *us* with the sects, as though we, like them, were seeking intellectual agreement with ourselves, as the only remedy for the broken peace of Christendom ? Have we penetrated the sects with the knowledge that the only view we would have them to abandon, as essentially Antichristian, is that men cannot enter into union with God except through the same creeds—that the only view we care for their adopting, as essentially Christian, in whose train all truth would be *free* to follow, is, that God can draw the hearts of His children to Himself by the attraction of His image in our human nature—that through the fellowship of love and aspiration with His holy Child, the first-born of many brethren, we can all dwell in the bosom of the same Father, and as

branches of the same spiritual vine have the roots of our life in God? Men know that which we deny. Have we rendered it impossible for them to be ignorant of what with our whole souls we accept? The world knows that we deny the Trinity. *Does* it know the Father we adore—the Saviour we love—the Church we contemplate? Above all, is it constrained to acknowledge that God must be with us of a truth, for that none could do the works that we do unless our Father fed our hearts with His living grace?

Have we not relied too much upon the reasonableness of our opinions—too little upon spiritual power and personal enthusiasm? The religion that moves men's souls is not contained in expositions of truth, if truth means exactness of definition and correctness of thought; but upon the truth loved and embodied which is impersonation and life. We have invested our faith, wrapped our religious trusts in the maxim—that truth is mighty, and will prevail. Yes, but *what* truth? The truth that is adequately exhibited and applied. It is not the truth of theory, of agreement, of statement, that gains religious sway over men's souls: but truth of feeling and of action, which comes not in word, but in power—in living shapes of love and self-denial, with the imperishable beauty of holiness upon it—such truth as Christ had in his mind when he said, 'I am the Truth!'

Our want of great success upon the popular mind is a fact that we must account for in some

way. No doubt many causes enter into the true explanation, and not a few over which we could have no kind of control ; but have not the circumstances of our history and of the religious world around us, perhaps without any fault of ours, contributed to the suppression in us of spiritual fervour and of mighty deeds of faith ? Alas ! we never have been free to follow our own impulses and pursue our own life. Our religious entail has been an hereditary conflict with opinions ; and when the world has seen our face, it has been turned in protest upon their darkness—a darkness which *they* did not feel, rather than when transfigured by the natural glory of our own love and trust.

No religious faith can mightily prosper until, by the power and loveliness of its natural fruits and the fuller lights and streams of perfection in which it reveals God, it awakens men to a completer sense than they possessed before of spiritual beauty and good. Have we not turned our very strength into weakness, and in our character of earnest and devout inquirers, strong in the faith that God and His truth were with us, too serenely awaited the result, forgetting that the only light which God makes victorious is the light that warms, the light of life and sacrifice ? I blame not the holy men that have gone before us, our fathers in this faith—the latches of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. Like the Baptist, they did what was given them to do, and wisdom is justified of all her children. Nay, it

is not for me to blame any one ; it may be that we are what we are in unaffected honesty, and that God has not hitherto called us to higher work. But I should, indeed, despair if we did not look and pray for something better—if we did not live on the belief that God's mightiest agents are yet in reserve—not in the cogency of convincing arguments, but in the incalculable spiritual force which streams from the inspired lives of devoted men. When the fullness of time is come, He will send forth the spirits which the times require. When the word can be spoken with effect, the needed servants of the Most High will appear to speak it.

Even now, one often thinks, such is the confusion of our religious things, so manifestly are our old systems showing their insufficiency, and the broad lights of Heaven streaming through the earthly chinks, that a word spoken with power ought to shake them down—that any clear utterance of spiritual truth forcible enough to make the nation hear it, would render impossible any longer continuance of all that unreal religion which has St. Paul's mark of carnality upon it—that it makes strifes and divisions.

But the time is not yet ripe, though ripening. We at least do not seem elected to that service. Perhaps our trial is—and it is a trial that might develop in us noble spiritual virtues—that, like the Prophetess of old, we are so placed that our message is not listened to ; that it must be spoken by other

lips than ours before the world will hear it. It may not be altogether our fault, that our Truth has not burned with such conspicuous fire of life as to consume around it the wood and hay and stubble. I rather thank God that at least we have simulated nothing; that in circumstances of peculiar temptation to forsake our simplicity, to stretch forth our hand to something that was not yet ours, our outward expression has ever been rather *under* than above our actual temperature. We have borne patiently the reproach of coldness, rather than assume heat. In an age of religious excitement and exaggeration, in the midst of coarse vehemence, of sensuous appeals, of theatric eloquence, of exhibitory worship, we have refused to go beyond the words of truth and soberness that were natural to us. They may have been weak and poor: they were at least real. We have been called lifeless. I claim for us the distinction of being at least simple and sincere. Let us abide by that holy reality. Let us not use so much as a tone of the voice, in emphasis on a word, beyond the truth of feeling. These perhaps are the directions and preparations of heart that the Spirit will not disdain. But God forbid that we should be satisfied with what we are—that our words and deeds should seem to ourselves enough for the conversion of the world! God forbid that we should even be surprised at our want of success!

We cannot, indeed, *make ourselves* mighty ser-

vants and prophets of the Most High: we cannot snatch at or work ourselves up to, that personal fervour which is *given* from above—but we can know our need and our place: we can pray for that which we have not: we can discern, if we are earnest and look upwards, the kind of men that must come to speak and to live: and we can prepare for the rising up perhaps from amongst us, in due time, of some nurtured in holy simplicity, upon whom the Spirit that bloweth where it listeth may list to breathe. Let us despise or discard nothing that we have hitherto valued,—calmness, quietness, simplicity, learning, knowledge, exact thoughts, clear understandings and sound minds—but let us value them chiefly as preparations for the reception and transmission of God's Spirit, so that when it comes to us it may find in us nothing to corrupt, or impede, or turn aside the purity of its light. And let us not despair nor be impatient of God's slowness. He is waiting for the time and seasons; and when Christianity is once again worthily represented in living men, there will be found multitudes and multitudes of souls, now perhaps out of all visible communion with the churches, who will start at their word—multitudes on multitudes with whom all those powers and obstacles which we find so repressive—habitual fear and regard for the world's opinion, social temptations, early prejudice, fashion, orthodoxy, priesthoods—have not a breath of influence; who will render themselves up to any who will send life into their

spiritual nature, who will fill them with serene sentiments to take away their weary degradation and ennoble their being,—to any who will show them their God.

Let us hold fast by the Realities that are given to us—not eager for ourselves, nor troubled that a more conspicuous work is not given for us to do—that, after so many years of preparing the soil and sowing the seed, others seem to be coming in to reap our harvest. We deserve to lose it all, if we ever sought it for self-glory. And the hidden stones of the Temple, far away out of sight, are of those that could least be spared. In His own time, God will send the agents that His kingdom needs. It may not be ours to raise the Church of the Future; but nothing now can destroy the history of the Past; that *to us* for many a day, in loyalty to the spirit of Truth and the spirit of Liberty, God committed the holy privilege of preserving and honouring the seed of that Tree of Life beneath whose ever-spreading branches all people shall rest.

Much discussion has recently arisen as to whether our being known simply by the *Unitarian* name does not lead the rest of the Christian world, who have mainly a dogmatical, and, therefore, a sectarian, conception of Christianity, on this point to confound us with themselves—and to conceal the fact, that though we as they seek doctrinal truth as a necessity of our being, we yet regard nothing as of the essence of Christianity but the drawings of a man's heart to

God through the attraction of His Image in His Son—that *to us* every one is a Christian who desires to be a child of God after the likeness of Christ Jesus. I have, therefore, laid before you this morning the views upon this subject which, sixteen years ago, I preached before the Unitarian Association as part of a sermon which by their direction was published at the time. The words ‘Unitarian Christianity’ to us convey not one dogma, but the whole glory of Revelation—all that we believe of the Father, and of the Son, and of the great work of Christ to make men one with God, as *he* was. But I am afraid we should greatly deceive ourselves if we supposed that the word ‘Unitarian’ conveyed this fullness of meaning to the rest of the Christian world. I am afraid that the rest of the Christian world knows nothing of our Christianity except what our dogmatic name conveys, that we deny the Trinity, and do not worship Christ as God. And it is certainly an anomaly that we who alone among Christians do not make salvation depend upon doctrines, alone among Christians are known by a doctrinal name. If the world knew all that we mean when we call ourselves Unitarian Christians, there would be nothing more to be desired. The question is, whether the world is not ignorant of this, and whether we can do anything to remove that ignorance by writing on our banners the essential Christianity which underlies all doctrinal differences. Now this is a question with which it is difficult to understand

how there should come to mingle any heats of feeling. If any great fitting symbol or expression could be found of our purely spiritual fellowship with God and Christ, it would be our clearest duty to wear it as a frontlet. No one supposes that we are to cease to be anything that we have hitherto been—that we are to refuse our doctrinal name—that we are to undervalue doctrinal truth, or renounce its propagation, or repudiate an Association of individuals for its defence and illustration. But a doctrinal association is one thing ; the communion of all Christian hearts is another. And the simple question is, whether along with all, in addition to all we are and have been, and have no thought of disowning, we can do anything more to exhibit to the world the purely spiritual character of the Church of Christ—whether, whilst open as the day as to all our doctrinal convictions, and preaching them as fervently as ever, we can undertake a yet greater and an utterly neglected work, to set forth the true Church of the Holy Spirit, the Church of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus—to proclaim the essence of Christian fellowship, and, if possible, bear it on our foreheads. Surely it must be right to desire to set so great a truth before the world, though it be only an endeavour, and success must be with God, not with us.

Meanwhile, now and ever, our fellowship is with all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

## PREVENTIVE JUSTICE AND PALLIATIVE CHARITY;

OR,

WISDOM FOR THE FUTURE, AND MERCY FOR THE PRESENT.<sup>1</sup>

*'And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people.—MATT. ix. 35.*

THERE are but two things required to ensure a full flow of charity: that the veil of distance which hides the separate classes from one another be removed—so that human distress be actually witnessed by human eyes, or vividly conceived by human sensibilities;—and that we be made free of the doubt whether we are not maintaining in existence the sources of evil by artificially palliating their effects. For there is a chilling fear which knowledge lays upon compassion, lest it directly foster or create distress by the effort to relieve it.

<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached in Renshaw-street Chapel, Sunday, November 30th, 1845, on behalf of the Liverpool Dispensaries.

Every public charity for the support of indigence is, in fact, a public proclamation to the indolent and the vicious that they shall not have the pangs of destitution to encounter as the wages of indulgence, for that society will interfere to protect them against the natural consequences of in exertion, improvidence, and waste,—and also a temptation to the independent and honourable poor to abandon the hard strife by which they have upheld their self-sufficiency, and made their own hands minister to their own necessities.

There is a fear also, not only of multiplying distress by *palliative* charity, but far worse, of corrupting the character of the people ; of stepping in between their consciences, and hearts, and suffering sensibilities, and the direct lessons of God—of blunting the edge of discipline—of presumptuously interfering with the natural administration of Providence, in which retributive penalties are a divine provision for the education of mankind. Such fears imply no absence of tender and prompt compassion, but rather that the higher charity of thought, and wisdom, and principle has been called in to direct the instincts of the heart. Nor would they require the most severe reasoner to abstain from relieving witnessed distress ; but only that he abstain from doing it in a manner calculated to create *new* distress ; only that he observe the Christian rule of charity, to let not his left hand know what his right hand doeth ; only that he corrupt not the steadfast patience of the poor,

nor by the open patronage of suffering vice tempt the brave heart of suffering virtue, lower the worth, and efface the distinctions of its honest independence.

In a right state of society, there would be no *public* charities of any kind whatsoever. The natural provisions which God makes for the subsistence of man, and the relief of his afflictions, would be found sufficient. These are : individual labour, sustained and stimulated by the objects of desire that are natural to all men ; the ties of family and kindred, when incapacity or misfortune cut off the supplies of personal exertion ; the charities of neighbourhood, which, when kindred fail, would flow spontaneously towards unbefriended suffering, as often as by the occasions of acquaintance and vicinage it was brought under the notice of pitying hearts ; and such a just and healthy condition of the relations of classes, of capital and labour, of employer and employed, as would bring them into *moral* connexions with each other,—and for the present absolute ignorance and material distance, or obstinate mechanical reserve, which no kind-hearted man would maintain towards a dumb animal, substitute the spiritual offices of a fraternal and respectful intercourse. I include this last among the natural provisions made by God, to supply suffering with prompt relief—with responsible protectors, because, however the existing condition of society may practically disown the obligation, no man, who believes in

a God at all, will deny that the 'diversities of gifts,' and the differences of operations,' are designed to subserve a spiritual purpose; that though there be 'many members,' there should be but 'one body;' and that 'the members should have the same care one for another.' That human restrictions make a scarcity of food does not affect the fact that God's natural provision is abundant for the world. And that men sicken, and languish, and die unnoticed, though there is both abounding wealth and, if it could be reached, abounding mercy in the community, does not destroy the fact that there are divine provisions, both in the human heart and in the personal relations of society, for the natural relief and absorption of all the woes of man.

But whilst we admit that in a *right* condition of society there would be no public institutions for the relief of indigence or even of disease,—that the whole work of charity would be private, secret, and personal, proceeding freely from the actual relations of kindred, or neighbourhood, or employment, we do not for a moment admit that this absolves us from brotherly attention to the present victims of a *wrong condition of society*, whose sad case the natural provisions of God now fail to meet. And here we tread upon the ground of those who look at the relations of want and charity with the singly-directed eye of political economy, and who, on the strength of indisputable principles of an economic kind, deem it a high Christian duty to

steel their hearts, like martyrs, against headlong sensibilities, and resolutely to refuse, at whatever cost of feeling, to deal with *symptoms* whilst the disease itself is not only left untouched, but actually screened from hostile observation by all this assiduous removal or alleviation of its evil and endless workings.—I have stated the case so as to preserve, uninjured, the benevolence of the objectors, because I am satisfied that any other statement of it is a low-minded injustice; and because I think it becomes this place to express a decided preference for the benevolence of thoughtfulness and principle, over the undirected instincts of nature.—We cannot deny then to these true analysts of our social condition, that the sickness prevailing among the working classes of this community, which in one year throws forty thousand patients on the two Dispensaries alone, is only a *symptom* of general poverty and wretchedness; and that again, the poverty itself is only a symptom of vicious ignorance, of defective employment, of crippled industry, and bad laws; and that the effectual remedy is not in doles, and alms-houses, and hospitals, and dispensaries,—but in education and unfettered industry, and good government, and the free enjoyment of God's sanitary agents, which are: fresh air, pure and abundant water, clear and unpoisoned skies. We know that the dispensers and patrons of public charities are looked upon by many a philosophic philanthropist as belonging to the worst description

of empirics, as men who would busy themselves with outward symptoms on the skin, whilst disease was destroying, unnoticed, the springs of life ; or who would strive to bale out a sinking ship, whilst the whole ocean was rushing through an unstopped leak.

Now the truth is that both parties are engaged in a necessary work, and that they must consent to work on together until society is brought into such a sound condition that the ministration of charity may safely be entrusted to the private offices of life. The economist has mainly in view to dry up the source, and so prevent the creation of *future* evils, whilst the *charitable* addresses himself to the alleviation of the misery that is *actual and before his eyes*. The one stands between present and future and stays the plague : the other does what he can to relieve the wretchedness which it is now too late to prevent. *Wisdom* may prevent the sore terrors and burdens of these times from falling on the men of a later generation, or possibly may clear our own skies in coming years ; but *Mercy* and *Sympathy* must bear the burden of the day that is passing over our heads. To provide wisely for the future, and to deal mercifully with the present, are not incompatible duties.

Nothing can make it right that human suffering should fall under human eyes, and be disregarded. Nay, it is a small thing that men perish in sickness and want, in comparison with the dreadfulness of

their so perishing without stirring the hearts of their fellow-men to pity and help. And it is a monstrous doctrine that the *errors* of the privileged and the powerful are to be corrected by leaving unmitigated the sufferings of their victims, that the mighty mass of woe may stand forth, an unbroken measure of the enormity of the mis-government,—that human wretchedness is to be unrelieved, whilst attention is exclusively directed to the legislative principles on which the health of the future must depend. '*These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*'

And this refusal to alleviate *symptoms*, which are present miseries, whilst you are striving against their sources, which are legislative errors, is especially cruel, in as much as the real sufferers are, for the most part, those who have no control over the vicious legislation, and are only its helpless victims. It reminds one of what was an habitual affliction in the days of the Anti-slavery struggle, when comfortable men here in England, who never knew what field-work was, or felt the driver's lash, used with astonishing placidity to profess *their* determination to stand upon principle, and accept no compromise, and refuse every proposal for present alleviation and gradual extinction—forgetting that in reality it was the unhappy slave who, in unsoftened hardships and prolonged bondage, had to pay the price of all this misdirected high-mindedness, this zeal for abstract justice.

So long as the wrong-doer is *one* person, and the sufferer *another*, I see not how any conflict with the *wrong* can absolve us from the duty of providing relief for the *suffering*. If, indeed, the destitution and weariness of life, the sickness and agony of heart, fell upon those who, however innocently—and we make no other supposition here—uphold the system which works all these evils and straitens the existence of our people, there might be reason, and mercy too, in letting the sharp lesson of experience be felt with unabated force by those with whom it lay to remedy the error. If such a case could happen, one might justly think it a questionable interference with the teachings of Providence, to save a legislator who creates an artificial scarcity from the sharp pang of want, in connection with the fact to be distinctly brought under his notice, that to relieve his sufferings, or at the least to prevent all similar suffering in the future, nothing was wanting but simple liberty to exchange the food of one country for the commodities of another; or to prevent a landlord who holds a monopoly of the very means of life from *feeling*, in his own person, what it would be to save a tenant's rent, or to subsist upon a labourer's wages; or to protect some rapacious owner of cottage property from *once knowing* what it is to be laid low on a sick bed, in dampness, and darkness, and stifling impurity. Those who are for attacking evils only at their fountain heads might, perhaps innocently, wish for

all these just so much of experience as would bring the *realities* before them ; but every principle of justice as well as of compassion requires us to shelter those who suffer what they do not cause—and whilst we contend with the promoters of evil, that we turn also in prompt mercy to its victims.

In fact, the time is not yet come when, with any decent consistency, this country can refuse to alleviate the symptoms of its wrong condition. When the political economy of the country is made right, it will be time enough to think of dispensing with its public charity ; for it sounds like a mockery to say that we will apply no remedy to the evil but a right political economy, at the very moment when nothing but a wrong political economy prevails,—and the chief sufferers have no connection with the maintenance of the evil, except it be in the unspeakable virtue,—that they endure it patiently. When we have conceded to Labour its just claims, it will be time enough to refuse it our supplementary alms. When we have unfettered their industry, it will be time enough to demand from the poor the virtues and the sufficiency of independence. To tie their hands, and refuse them the food which those hands might have gained, or a little medicine for the diseases which their enforced poverty creates, is neither more nor less than to refuse to remedy the evils which ourselves have done. Before we are entitled to throw the people on their own resources, we are bound to give freedom to their labour, educa-

tion to their minds, and to take upon ourselves to the fullest extent the moral duties that belong to us in our natural relations with our fellow-men. When this has been done, we may with more reason leave them to those retributive inflictions which would then be symptoms not of neglect and abuse and misdirection in *us*, but of vice and wantonness in *them*.

But though *actual* misery must be relieved, of whatever kind it may be, or however it came into existence, and no zeal to establish right principles for the future can release from the duty of mercifully regarding the sore consequences of wrong principles in the past, there is yet a wide difference in the nature and objects of our public charities,—a difference, indeed, so wide as to exclude some of them from the class of useful institutions, the legitimate projects of a wise and thoughtful benevolence.

We have no right so to relieve the misery of the present as to call into existence a greater amount of misery in the future. No institution is legitimate which multiplies the evil it professes to relieve. Now, all institutions for the support of indigence are of this nature. All institutions which offer to release the poor from meeting in their own strength the great and solemn duties of the home relations, whose responsibilities they have assumed, are of this evil nature. All institutions which proclaim to the poor that they need not be the protectors of their own offspring, even to the extent of finding food and raiment for the first hour of life, and that

thus make public provision for parental relations from which everything moral and sacred must be removed, are of this nature. I protest against being supposed to say that human misery is not to be relieved ; I only say that it is not to be created—that the duties of life, voluntarily assumed, are only in extreme cases to be vicariously discharged, and ought never to be openly provided for by public charities.

Poverty, want, sufferings, the prospect of having to meet, in our own strength, the trying occasions of existence, are the natural antagonists to the general temptations of men. Diminish the fear of these natural penalties, or even as much as turn the thoughts in the direction of foreign help, and these temptations become too powerful. It may be said, indeed, that no man likes poverty, or is in danger of being tempted by it ; but he may like the vices and the habits which lead to poverty ; or he may be easy and indolent, without the invention and exertion by which a hard lot is conquered, and public charities, by holding out some promise of protection against the consequences of vice or weakness, may deliver him over to his besetting sins. The promise, moreover, is for the most part false ; for in all these cases an amount of expectation is created indefinitely greater than the amount of relief administered. They make a man, according to St. Paul's estimation, 'worse than an infidel,' by tempting him to neglect the duty of 'providing for his own,' and

then they fail to provide for him. The natural reliances are broken down, and the artificial supplies are alike vicious in principle, and inadequate in measure.

I am aware that these remarks apply, more or less, to the operation of Poor Laws, though their tendency to *tempt* into poverty is perhaps much less than belongs to public institutions which do not mark as paupers the recipients of their bounty. Families will avail themselves of charitable institutions, and form all the habits of dependence, who would repel the idea of parish relief with pride and scorn, and whose honest self-reliance the Poor Laws would not have overcome. With these, moreover, we are not immediately concerned here, as they do not ask our aid in the character of charities.

There is, however, another class of charities which do not propose to 'feed the multitude,' or stand in their relations, but only to 'heal their diseases'; and though in a right state of society these too would certainly be superseded by the private offices of benevolence in the natural relationships of men, yet are they exempt from the specific objection which holds against every institution for the support of indigence. They do not create the *kind of evil* which they profess to relieve. There is not more sickness, but less sickness, in the community on account of Dispensaries and Hospitals. They mitigate the suffering that is brought before them, and promote no new suffering of the same de-

scription. The discipline of poverty is taken away when its subject is clothed, and fed, and freed from the fear of destitution ; but when the pressure of *disease* is loosened, the man is only raised up to meet the unabated struggle of existence. Alms, again, have no tendency to produce the gifts which they bestow ; they are not sources of abundance ; they can only make a new distribution, and often it must be a very bad distribution, of the food or the clothing that is already in existence ; they take from one and give to another ; but Hospitals and Dispensaries are the direct producers of blessings, they do not distribute the *existing* amount of health, but create new health—they are fountains of healing, and even producers of *wealth*, by restoring to labour the hand which disease had palsied, but which in our straightened condition can do no more, in its best times, than meet the necessities of the passing day.

I do not maintain that even these institutions are free from all objection, from some unavoidable abuse, but that both in their principle, and in their results, they differ so widely from all charities for the subsistence of human life as to release benevolence from the fear that in mitigating physical suffering it is fostering moral evil. It cannot be concealed, indeed, that though they do not, like all alms-giving charities, create the very evil they profess to cure, they may in some cases render less terrible the natural penalties of other evils,—of improvidence and vicious

indulgence. Though I should, therefore, feel myself on still safer ground, if pleading for the blind, the maimed, the deaf or dumb, the idiot or the insane, who cannot maintain themselves, whose numbers cannot be increased by the evil operations of charity, and who are marked out by God's own finger for the compassion of all men—still in the present state of the community these charities are absolutely necessary, their general operation is good, and the exceptional cases must be confided to the wisdom and vigilance of their excellent administration.

I should prefer, indeed, that all relief was administered through the agency of one institution, like the 'District Provident Society,' or a Ministry to the Poor, supported by the associated Christianity of the whole community, which, whilst not professing to supply want, and entering the dwellings of the poor for higher purposes, would yet bring under the notice of wise and merciful men such necessities as it found. But if our institutions are not of the best possible kind, the fault lies with *us*, not with the poor; and whilst mourning over imperfections, we must not leave them with no charity at all. It is *possible*, for instance, that these Dispensaries may not be on the wisest principles, and that they ought, in a large measure, to be self-supporting; it is *possible* that their administration may not be the most searching, devised with perfect skill to detect and frustrate improper application, though, in fact, in this latter respect, no ordinary care is taken, no

common strictness used ; but even supposing these institutions defective, in principle or management, still, until *we* find and apply the better methods, we are bound to maintain in operation such instruments as we have, and not to stay our hands altogether from assuaging misery, because we doubt the absolute wisdom of *the only existing means*.

And *this* town is especially bound to alleviate the sickness of its poor ; for, in fact, it creates their sickness. With us lies the sin—with the poor, the burden and the sorrow. Among the essentials of health are air, and water, and light, and dry warmth, and purity. Of these they are robbed, without having any power of prevention ; and one half of the community perpetrates the wrong, and the other half permits it. The health of the poor must depend much upon the homes of the poor ; and it depends much on their morals, and their domestic tastes, and their in-door interests—and what can these be in Liverpool, with its forty thousand dwellers in cellars, and its sixty thousand dwellers in courts ! It is not that there are more courts in Liverpool than in other towns, for Birmingham, with half its population, has more than the number of its courts ; but so freely has human life been sacrificed here, rather than that land should be *sacrificed*—for that is the word employed before a Committee of the House of Commons—that the average size of a court in Birmingham is twelve times the average size of a court in Liverpool ; whilst in Birmingham no such

thing could be discovered as a human being living in a cellar.

The counterpoise to the temptations of a man, even of education and some mental resources, may depend much upon the attractions of his home. After his day's toil, the strong man will not sit down to gaze vacantly on bare walls, darkness, and dampness. Only place yourselves, with all the thoughts and pictures with which knowledge has stored your minds, to pass the long hours, with folded hands, in one of those dreary caverns. And the empty mind, especially, must have household comfort, and some cheerful surroundings, else evil spirits, ruinous to health and virtue, will flock to it, as to a place swept and empty, prepared and garnished for their use. There is no more flagrant evidence of the utter disregard with which law and government have consigned the labourer to the monied classes, than that afforded by the whole of the circumstances connected with the building and letting of the tenements of the poor. Life, health, decency, daily disgust and wretchedness, malaria, fever, and death weigh not with builders and landlords to the extent of the cost of a common drain. They draw their rent from places in which they know that people must inevitably sicken and perish. The landowner who sells his land, careless of its ultimate appropriation, if he gets his price—the small capitalist who trades in pest houses—the corporate body, that not only permits the sordid cruelty within its circle of influ-

ence, but disposes of its own land with the understanding that houses are to be built upon it 'back to back,' and the government that calls none of these parties to account, that interferes not in these vital matters, at least so far as to see that local power meets local abuse,—are all participators in an injury to the poor, whose enormity it is impossible to describe, for the details embrace everything that is morally or physically impure.

And now when the poor come in their sickness to ask for charity, what has this community done for their health that it should refuse the plea? The municipality, with the revenue of many a kingdom, not only has preserved no open places for the poor man's foot, but has so blocked up our vast river, that natural fountain of freshness and health, that no man, poor or rich, can even see it, with verdure beneath him and a clear sky above him, without travelling a weary distance, and from private property, on which he trespasses, or enters by sufferance. But these may be considered boons;—has it then given the poor man his rights? Has it drained the stagnant pool from his door; or brought cheap water to his dwelling; or as much as trapped the grating of the common sewer that, even in our better streets, not a hundred yards from where I stand, emits poisonous exhalations? It may be said that it has no revenues to bestow upon such purposes; and that this is not its province;—but it can have no higher province; and is it not, at this

hour, taking upon itself the vast expense of Courts of Law, providing for the comfort of lawyers and judges with means that ought *first* to have gone to preserve the life and morals of the people?

And the rich—do they not wantonly create a grim and filthy population by nuisances which are merely incidental to their own prosperity, and known to be capable of easy remedy? A manufacturer stifles the breath, and corrupts the moral tastes of a whole community, makes to the poor cleanness and the pride of home an impossibility by noxious vapours which he might consume, certainly at a small cost, perhaps profitably. He prospers by means which destroy the life of some and comfort of all, and he rolls away in easy luxury to verdure and rural freshness, and thinks he does no wrong in needlessly blackening the heavens and poisoning the air for his private benefit, or rather as a mere contingent accompaniment of his private benefit, which he might remove at pleasure if the health, and comfort, and decent habits of the people were a sufficient motive in his eyes. And the merchant and the river authorities suffer the lower parts of the town, where chiefly the poor are clustered, to be loaded with defiling smoke, to be approaching daily to the vile state of one of our worst manufacturing towns,—though they might extinguish the nuisance and the deformity by means so easy as a simple order, that within the bounds of the river, wherever an entire consumption of the fuel cannot be effected, coke should be used for coal.

It is clear that in a community really civilized these things could not be permitted ; health, and freshness, and beauty could not be disregarded. And now the evils which we would not prevent, we must alleviate, and at a cost far beyond that of prevention. Liverpool, with natural advantages which perhaps no other place enjoys,—a town built on sloping hills, at whose base flows a river to wash its refuse to the ocean, and with a fresh breeze that blows for ever,—Liverpool is yet the most unhealthy town in these kingdoms ; and its poor, through these charities, now ask us to administer to the sickness and the helplessness which ourselves have created.—I say *ourselves*, for everyone in the community who has a voice that he has not raised, is a party to the wrong.

And everything in the state and workings of these charities is calculated to strengthen these just claims. They are more economical than any other institution of a similar kind in England : in proportion to the number of cases relieved, the expenditure is less here than anywhere else. They employ every precaution to help none who might help themselves, by applying a severe and strict rule to the number and the income of families, and excluding all whose means might provide for their own necessities. The sufferers they annually relieve more than average forty thousand persons. The expenditure is but three thousand pounds ; and of this sum its certain income does not reach the two-thirds. I find that nearly

twenty years ago the number of patients was considerably less than it was last year, whilst the amount of annual subscriptions was considerably greater. I am aware that since that time other institutions share with these charities the care of the destitute sick ; but still the fact is not creditable to our growing liberality, that with wealth so immeasurably increased, we permit a larger amount of suffering to be encountered with smaller (certain) means. It is a disgrace to the community that such an institution should have to resort to the uncertain supplies of Charity Sermons : but it now asks us to relieve it from pressing debt,—and we must do what we can.

Picture to yourselves the countless poor of this place in sickness and want : realize the case of a single sufferer : enter his dwelling ; breathe the unwholesome air, in which you droop, but in which he has to recover ; look around for the comforts by which your own lightest pain is soothed ; mark his wan looks, and the poor provision for his nourishment ; call to mind that, even in comparative affluence, sickness is felt to be a time of straitness and difficulty—that here, though the working hand is idle, and the source of daily supply stopped for a season, this charity neither feeds nor shelters its patients—that it gives nothing to the sick man but medicine,—and now asks the means even to do that ! —remember that Christ, though he refused to feed the multitude, never refused to ‘heal their diseases’

—that in that direction he laid no arrest upon his mercy.

Well, indeed, would it be for the health of our own souls if, like him, who, when ‘he healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people,’ ‘preached to them the gospel of the kingdom,’ we too should not only give but seek ; not only relieve but sympathize ; have a living intercourse with their hearts and minds ; speak to them, out of a Christian fellowship, words of truth and consolation,—and behold with our own eyes how our brethren live and die !

## RELIGION, THE CHURCH, AND THE PEOPLE.<sup>1</sup>

*'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.'*—I. COR. xii. 27.

THE dangerous element in the condition of a country is the severance, to whatever extent it may exist, of any portion of its people from the religious influences of society, from alliance with God, from a sense of spiritual fellowship with the other members of the commonwealth. This, and this only, is a real ground for alarm, that justifies forebodings of a still more disastrous future. All things else that affect a nation are merely circumstantial, and may be conquered or regulated by spiritual energy; but this is vital, and stops or corrupts the source of health and power—puts out the eyes that alone see into the true principles of social unity. Hardships may make a nation's greatness. Pestilence or famine are but transient disorders in external nature, not abiding poisons in the human

<sup>1</sup> A Sermon preached in Lewin's Mead Chapel, Bristol, Sept. 23, 1849, on behalf of the Ministry to the Poor in Bristol.

soul,—momentary suspensions of the earth's accustomed health, in order that trust in God and love for man may have the opportunity of manifesting their independent qualities, their spiritual endurance. The difficult soil, the severe climate, the primeval forest, take the impress of man's energy, and yield faithful returns to whatever deposits of wealth and toil a wise and patient purpose sheds upon them. Even great inequalities of condition are not inconsistent with contentment and with brotherhood, for there is a sympathy with man, as there is a sympathy with nature, which makes the mountains and the valleys, the rough and the plain, the crooked and the straight, the flowing harmonies of God, all needful to image His riches and His fulness, the brightness of His glory and the soft shadows of His love.

But a nation in large parts of which the Spirit of God does not reign, does not control, inform, and hold together; where there are large masses of men among whom the human eye is guided by no divine suggestion to the spiritual unity which would draw together into one body its broken and unequal members; and the human will is directed to no central good which it might build up by self-surrender and sacrifice, as a free worker with God; and the mightiest springs of action—the sense of beauty, and the love of things fair and excellent—have never had revealed to them that spiritual temple in which all would find their place, but whose symmetry God has to wait for human materials ere He can complete,

and to whose perfection the obscurest stone sunk in the foundations, or hidden in the walls, is just as essential as the heads of the corners : a nation with a portion of its population thus disunited from God, and blind to any purpose of His providence, is in as dangerous a condition as a system of worlds in which the reconciling energy, the invisible power of gravitation, was partially unfelt. A people swayed by no inward sympathy with the purpose of God, swept by passion, tortured by want, and dark at soul, are held back from headlong impulse only by those habits of submission which, at ordinary times, keep the most powerful animals in obedience to man, but which break, like rotten reins, when the fierce nature strains against them.

Those who have no insight into the moral end of *their own* existence will have no moral regard for anything else, and cannot be expected to devote themselves, against hardship and temptation, to work out, in their place, a scheme of spiritual fellowship in which they have no conscious participation ; to be the willing agents of a purpose the glory of which has never dawned upon their sight. If a man is lost to *himself* through the sin and selfishness of others, he is lost to *them*, too. Those who have suffered him to lose his own soul, cannot make him serve theirs. He can now serve them only by awakening them to a sense of past neglect, by spreading pestilence among them. When love and insight do not prompt the work of duty, but a little time elapses

ere disorder appears, and terror and retribution bring the knowledge of guilt.

How far any large portion of the population of this country is in this condition of alienation from the influences of religion, and from the binding, reconciling power of a divine purpose in their life, it may be impossible with any accuracy to determine. Sentiments, emotions, essentially the same as our own, may appear in forms so modified that we do not recognise them, or may be denied any sensible expression of which cognizance can be taken. We know too little of the inward consciousness of the toiling and the suffering poor, to be able to speak with any confidence of their own view of their own existence ; or to pretend that we can explore those secret springs of thought whence holy desires arise, and refreshing waters gush, and tell in what state they are. To reach this knowledge, we should almost require to be invisible witnesses in their dwellings, overhearing their most private revelations, and observing the involuntary expressions of their souls ; or to have so gained their confidence by the truth and simplicity of our brotherhood, that they disclose themselves without disguise and without restraint. For sometimes by the aid of another, an earnest, but undeveloped, man will draw deeper things out of his own heart, than if unprompted it could have distinctly uttered ; and in that clear birth of what had long been dimly struggling in him, he may attain for the first time any true idea of himself.

We are not to suppose that there is no sustaining or exalting sentiment in a man's soul, because it wants the faculty of speech. We are not to conclude because men do not appear in the public temples of religion, that they have no religion in their hearts. There may be a witness to God in the private spirit, which yet gives no witness to the world. It may sanctify the man, though he does not, and perhaps cannot, speak of it. We are all under the power of deep sentiments, to which we could not give a voice. Heaven, God, Immortality, ideal life, a pure and blessed world that is to satisfy our thirst for unembarrassed existence and passionless peace, flow in faint undertones through all the noise and confusion of our daily being, and, in the momentary silence of other things, break into melodies so sweet and clear, that we know they must have mingled insensibly with our most common moments, and, when not upon our lips, and scarcely in our thoughts, have yet been the secret strength and inspiration of our hearts. And God withholds not His spirit from the straitened and the toiling. The holy fountain of their nature is not closed. They, too, are under the power of sentiments which they cannot define, and seek not to express ; cheered by vague hopes that thrill like wild music through the inner mysteries of their being ; sustained above their lot by a peace that passeth understanding ; held in their patient course, not without some consciousness of the pressure of the hand of God. To this extent,

a large amount of religion may fairly be taken for granted in the working classes, where yet it does not manifest its existence by any express testimony.

And how much is there that does reveal itself with the holiest signs of power and truth! How much is there of uncomplaining suffering that is comforted only by the thought, that it is the Almighty's will! How much of patient hope in God, often all the more lovely that it springs out of the natural piety of a devout heart, with no light of knowledge to penetrate their darkness, and explain why the burden of life falls so heavily upon *them*! How much of tender compassion, and prompt help, for the afflicted in their own condition, a sympathy from the living springs of brotherhood! How much of purity, and grace of sentiment, and sacredness of thought, in scenes where the soul must sustain itself, with no aids from without, and in the midst of many defilements! How much of unenvious service, of faithful and even affectionate devotion to the more favoured classes, from those who must yet often be struck with the frivolity and hard-heartedness of wealth, who must often see thrown away upon the pleasure or luxury of a moment, what to them would change the face of life, and who cannot be supposed always to understand that the sore inequality of condition is a wise ordinance of God, and not the wilful work of man!

These facts have not testified as fully as they ought to have done to the religion of the poor; they

have not testified as fully as they ought to have done to the universal connection of God with the human heart, under whatever lot.

But after all these just recognitions of some divine sentiment insensibly pervading, or consciously sustaining, the souls of the people, there will remain dense masses of human life in whose crowded squalor no earnest eye can find signs of hopefulness, or trust, or inward discipline, or any steadfast purpose, to impart a spiritual meaning to existence; who are living under no higher modifications of the mere instincts of nature than that which the external civilization, from whose service they draw their maintenance, forces upon them; who show no trace of having reached that first and lowest state of feeling out of which issue all sacred things—an appreciation of order, a desire for stability and comfort, the anxiety and solicitude that befit moral creatures for the well-being and the well-doing of their own offspring; who have no friendly relations with society, no insight into the value of their own functions, which might soothe hardship by the sweet sense of usefulness, and through the power of self-respect restrain brute recklessness and passion; who have no conviction of God to raise their souls above the degradation of their bodies, and *are* only what they *appear*, immured, imprisoned, within the gross and wretched dungeons of their physical being, with no light, no liberty, no wider prospects through their spirits; who, if they are contented, have sunk

into acquiescence because the moral cravings of a man have perished, and if they struggle and aspire, are thirsting and restless, because the passions of a man survive.

How falsely, unworthily, and disastrously for itself does the world reckon the efficacy of spiritual power ! The truest, the most serviceable answer that could be given to the question, how is such a condition as we have just pictured to be transformed and transfigured, is, that each man who, through God's blessing, has a holier view of life, must fasten with his whole heart, his whole mind, his whole soul, with the whole powers of his sympathies and brotherhood, on some other man who has it not, and impart it to him. For this is a true picture of vast numbers who need nothing earthly, nothing but a new light in their souls, nothing but a moral view of existence, to rise at once to a most honoured life ;— who already bear manfully their own burdens, and ask for nothing they do not earn ; who eat no bread of idleness, and take to labour as uncomplainingly as if it was the inevitable heritage of man, as if day by nature's doom was due to toil, and night the restorer of strength only that they may toil again ; who have made this age what it is by their skill, their industry, their capacity, their willingness ; who rear our civilization, but immolate themselves ; who can work all wonders, but cannot guide their own lives, or turn to wise account their own means, or secure their own comfort, or save their

own souls. Almost all that distinguishes this age is the work of their hands. Every wonderful instrument is comprehended by their minds, and fashioned by their fingers. Every delicate fabric and luxury by which wealth or pride would mark their separation from the people, were made by the people. The support, the decorations, and the marvels of our existence, our conquests over time, and space, and matter, of which we boast so loudly, are all wrought by their means.

These lives, so serviceable to others, what want they but a light in the soul, a purpose in the conscience, to become exalted and blessed in themselves! What want they but sacredness of heart, to produce the noblest forms of spiritual dignity the world has ever witnessed, bringing the highest spirit to the lowest task, combining simplicity of condition with elevation of being, the energies and self-denial that make light of labour with a sweet and gentle nature, robust powers with refined thoughts, the consciousness of immortality with the contentment of toil—true types of Christian greatness borrowed from him who took the place of a servant and made himself of no reputation!

There is, indeed, another *caste* in our irreligious population besides those who sustain their own burdens by honest toil, and want only some wisdom of the soul to make their lives as peaceful as they are laborious, full of beauty as of use;—predatory hordes who hover on the skirts of our civilization to

take advantage of every exposed position or unguarded moment;—and mere children, tempted, compelled, often purposely incited to live by plunder,—who in fact are orphans, or worse than orphans, with no parents worthy of the name, unbefriended by society and strangers to God; but these are incidental to a diseased condition of the great working class, incapable of continuance if that class was sound at heart, and would be kept in effectual check or disappear with their causes, if the willing labour of the world had only some spiritual discernment in its soul.

We blame the toiling for the wretchedness of this infatuated state, for the hideous folly of a life of hardship, followed up by the insane flinging away of the means of culture and of blessedness which it places in their hands. But is not our own powerlessness and our own failure precisely in the same direction? Is not the moral condition of the working man at least as fatal a witness against *us*, as against him—a proof of exactly the same ignorance, recklessness, or weakness? We can educate his hand, but cannot guide his mind. We can rule his body, but cannot sway his affections, his conscience, and his heart. We can train him to co-operation with any of our physical purposes, however delicate or elaborate, but cannot take him into the fellowship of our only true life. And in this we are only what he is—mighty with nature, but feeble with man. And may it not be that, if his soul had appeared as

useful to us as his body, we should have found a way to train that too—that if his character, and his piety, and the moral order of his life, had been as obviously available to our direct interests, we should have found it no more impossible to enlighten his desires, and discipline his habits, and open his sympathies, than to make such a perfect instrument of his bodily frame, and subdue all his instincts to the yoke of toil ?

This age, so wonderful in production, so potent in machinery, in arts, and engineering, has a very loose hold on man. It has no mastery over spiritual elements. It is bewildered by the moral conditions of its own agents. It cannot solve even its own problems. It cannot bring capital and labour into harmonious relations. It cannot distribute its own products. With unexhausted, and it may be inexhaustible, resources, it cannot find work for willing hands, even so far as that the hungry shall be fed, and the naked clothed. It cannot do so simple a thing as to bring the two instruments of production, the employers and the employed, into such mutual good understanding that they will co-operate together for their own benefit without violent disruptions. Look abroad to the unsettled condition of every question into which enter spiritual forces and requisitions, human desires and wants. You can hardly find a permanent form of Society or an acceptable Church. The nations have not yet found a civil constitution under which they are satisfied to

live, or the right relations of religion to a state, or any method of making right and reason displace the sword, as an arbiter between them.

Or look at home, and contrast our mechanical might with our spiritual helplessness, in the most elementary and the most vital matters. We cannot educate our people, or give them any clear ideas of the most simple and essential things. We cannot stop the course of juvenile delinquency. We cannot take disease and sin in their early stages, ere they run to a foul head, and treat them remedially. We have so little serviceable power over the soul or the body of a criminal that, in despairing confession of a total inability either to serve him or to use him, we have only the horrid resource to take his life, to remove him off the earth, and place him in God's hands for farther treatment,—for that our wisdom, or our love, are utterly at fault. We cannot even succeed in securing the primary physical arrangements on which moral well-being depends. We cannot maintain sanitary conditions, even to the extent in which machinery is all powerful. We are not adequate to cleanse the dwellings of the people, or so much as safely to bury their dead out of their sight.

There is not much in all this to be proud of. We boasted too soon, and lived too fast. The imposing forms of material power dazzled and deceived us. We talked of the universal march of mind, when there was no such thing. Our prosperity was a sudden growth, like Jonah's gourd which came up in

a night, and like Jonah's gourd it had a worm at its root, to smite its life. Its foundations were in spiritual darkness and rottenness. We made the souls of men secondary things, or supposed they would adjust themselves to circumstances, and follow the law of physical advancement. The glare and excitement put out our eyes. We were idolaters of Nature, and trusted for salvation in new and vast powers over matter, and looked for a golden age, and saw not that all this might be, and yet God not be with us. We needed a prophet, to tell us of the end of all idolatry,—and lo there was no man.

The condition of class isolation that ensued was only natural to the circumstances,—that is, it could not but ensue unless the spiritual sentiment, the moral solicitude of men had set their energies against it. It might have been warded off if the real interests of society had ranked first—otherwise it was inevitable. The forces of the soul could have made the new influences contribute to the highest end of God's providence, to the formation of a Christian community, a body without schism, whose members work together for a common good and are held by one spirit in vital union: but, in the absence of these forces, the law of material attraction prevailed, the classes fell apart according to their outward affinities, and walls of almost impassable separation grew up between them. What these walls are, any one may know by reflecting on how little natural intercourse he has with those out of his own class,

on the subjects which are of the deepest moment to human beings.

The distinction of ranks, the division of employments does not prevent, but makes, the combination of their labour, their effective co-operation when physical production is the central aim;—for *that* result we have still the directing head, the overlooking eye, the working hand, and the messenger foot,—many members in one body,—but for *spiritual* purposes, they dwell asunder, and are not tempered together by God, and do not edify one another in love, and are not the Body of Christ and members in particular. For any spiritual end, any upholding and mingling of one another before God, the eye does say to the head, and the head to the feet, for their sterile silence is trumpet tongued, ‘I have no need of *you*.’

It is too obvious how from this disconnection of the several parts of society, which arose from no intention, but from the absence of any strong view of the religious idea of the community as a School and a Church, the least instructed portions,—associating together, assimilating to one another, touched by no better influences than emanated from themselves, brought into no soothing or loving contact with higher forms of life, set free, even as to their daily habits, from the control of public sentiment which exerts so large a power upon us all, the observing eye of those whom we revere or fear, and so abandoned to the inertia of nature,—conformed not to

their souls but to their circumstances, and sunk to an existence which was inevitable, if aspiration and spiritual effort had no place, as forces, in their being. Religion in such circumstances soon becomes a feeble power. It is an inward voice, and if nothing echoes it, if no higher conscience takes it up, and returns it upon us in clearer forms and more piercing tones, if there is no actual voice, and no outward goodness, that appeals to this inward witness for God and Holiness, and will not suffer us to ignore its promptings, but holds its work before it, —the best of us need not be told how, unsupported and unseconded, and with no living presence to encourage or rebuke it, it sinks into the silence and apathy of all neglected things. Like a plant from which the buds are continually rubbed off, after a few ineffectual protests it gives over the effort and perishes away.

Under such abandonment to circumstance, children grow up without culture, without reverence, without sacred thoughts, without prayer, without the enriching happiness of moral training and restraint, and when the most impressible years have passed, the seed time has been lost, and the habits of the outward life, become a second nature, have overgrown the fountains of the first. Nor is this surprising. The spiritual element in childhood, strong as Christ declared it to be, does require some answering experiences, some supports to cling to; the presence of moral beauty, the visible sway of

duty and of law, to give it a fair chance of bearing its natural fruit. It is no testimony to the materialism of man, that the spiritual forces in a child require example and culture, and some forms of outward life to reveal the meanings of their own promptings and desires. Let the parents only be removed from the direct influence of the sacred impressions that make the salt of the earth, from the sweet power of personal intercourse with cultivated man,—let the masses be in one place and the salt in another, and no meeting or intermixture take place between them, and he who wonders that, in such circumstances, religion gradually ceases to be a natural demand, not of isolated man, but of ignorance, coarseness and temptation neglected and fermenting together, has no adequate appreciation of how much he owes the vitality of his own soul and the orderly habits of his own existence, to the outward stimulus and protections which Society and God have drawn around him.

It might appear to be the express function of the Christian Church to interpose in such a crisis, and supply the absent influences to the endangered classes. But what is the Christian Church? The Church ought to be the nation, and is that portion of the nation which acts out the Christian faith: it is each man in his place, meeting his own responsibilities in a religious spirit, breathing purity, elevation, and love through all his connections with his fellow men. The Church is each individual, holding sacred rela-

tions towards life, and discharging its offices with a due feeling of their eternal significance ; and therefore, unless the Church and the whole people are commensurate, there must be essential work left undone, and tender and holy offices which no man fills.

The Church is not a supplementary body, for performing the unfulfilled portion of other people's duties. That is an impossibility. The great ends of God require the fulness of every man's labour. Whoever has his own functions discharged by another, to that extent has caused a waste and sacrifice of that other's power, which ought to have been free for other work. And though each man wrought his own work faithfully, there would be no superfluous energy in the world. God and our nature's growth would find employment for it all. The mission of the Church is to fill each man with the spirit of his own duties, but not in the least to relieve him of them or transfer them to itself, for that would imply that there was more energy in the world than could find work to do, if all worked.

Besides, there is an absolute incongruity in the idea that the influences which ought to emanate from one person can be furnished by any other, without losing their peculiar virtue. Only he who is clothed with all the circumstances of a relation can fill its offices. It is the position and attitude in which one man stands towards another, which gives its own efficacy to his personal bearing. Others may do

their best to heal the wounds of his neglect, but no one can take his place. It is a parent's relation that gives a parent's spirit its holy power, and if in a parent's place there stands one who has no parent's heart, no substituted love that strives to fill the void can also take the vantage ground of the natural tie. It is a master's place which gives a master's intercourse with his servant its moral potency, and no other man on earth can with the same effect discharge the acts of brotherhood that belong to *him*. To every natural relation there is a peculiar power for good, which cannot be alienated from it without being lost.

But though the Christian Church cannot fill the social place of its defaulting members, *there is* a saving influence which it might exert to an undefinable extent, if its constitution, and its own idea of its proper work gave full effect to its great and earnest powers. For it may be even a higher service to give a man an inward support against wrong, to sweeten him under the sense of neglect, than to provide that all his rights shall be respected and all his affections gratified. The spirit of wisdom and of God-bringing self-dependence, may raise a lowly man to a position of meek superiority over those who err and sin against him. He may be enabled to look with forbearance and compassion on those who abuse their place and power, and understand not his nature, or their own. Religion may come to him, and putting into him her own spirit, out of his

violated rights and wounded love exalt him to the greatness of the peace-maker, the merciful, the forgiving, and the long-suffering.

If Christ walked daily amongst the worst homes of our worst places, he would there strengthen the weak, and deliver the captives, and bind up the broken-hearted, and open the prison to them that are bound, even though all the other conditions of society remained the same, and he walked in sensible presence only with the poor, and never threw his awful gaze into the eyes of giddy pleasure, nor crossed the path of power, nor, as he passed by, made his shadow fall, like the shadow of the Tribunal, upon the marts of gain. Religion might have a representative, striving to be in Christ's spirit, among every group of neglected men, who, though he could not discharge towards them the duties of society, might yet raise them above its wrongs.

The Christian Church has instruments enough, and self-sacrifice enough, to parcel the world among her ministers, to break up the close layers of its masses so that, instead of only like consorting with like, and ignorance and vice pressed together lying in thick strata on one another, human beings, instead of dense impermeable clusters, should stand forth individual and distinct, so that air and light could circulate around them, and not one soul be left without living contact, through a brother's touch, with the sympathies of earth and the supports of heaven. But the Christian Church cannot do this as it now

exists. With its conflicting creeds, and rival interests, and deadly jealousies, it cannot unite its devoted servants, and send them forth in one spirit to divide the toil between them. If we were all of one heart, believing that holy affections are the only powers that can enlighten and regenerate fallen men, there might not be a spot in all this land, in which even an individual could be found without the light and love of a brother's spirit bent full upon him.

And why is not this the case now? Because, in consequence of our division about doctrines, *Christianity cannot be locally applied*. In that fact lies mainly the explanation of the spiritual condition, and destitution, of the people. A parochial administration of Christianity, a beautiful and a competent idea, is now an impossibility. A Catholic religion requires a Catholic Church, but we have only *Roman* Catholic Churches, and Church of England Churches, and Calvinistic Churches, and other reciprocally repelling and antagonistic, Churches. If Christianity was one power, and could use the world's wisdom of the division of labour, it could assign to each manageable district its own responsible agency, sufficient to flood it with light. But this cannot be, where you will hardly find two neighbouring houses in which the same theory of salvation is accepted. And so our Christian Churches gather their isolated worshippers from all quarters, and in our large towns at least, no man has an allotted field, and no Church,

and no person, is charged with the spiritual condition of any spot.

And thus our Churches sit apart, exerting some attraction over scattered individuals of like affinities among the dispersed multitudes, but with no power of thoroughly occupying the Field of the World, each cultivating its own corner of the vineyard. And as with that village of Samaria which would not receive our Lord because his face was as though he was going to Jerusalem, there are places in Christian lands where disciples, earnest and beloved as James and John, would not be received, and probably, like James and John, might know so little what spirit they are of, as to be ready to call down fire from heaven in their Master's name. These are the consequences of established creeds and Churches—and this the price we pay for a religion of doctrines instead of a religion that looks only to the spirit and the life, for a religion of saving orthodoxies, instead of a religion of all-purifying love.—The prophecy remains to be fulfilled, and Christianity cannot occupy the world as the waters cover the deep, because theology forbids the union and the distribution of its powers. We have left to Sin and Satan the advantage of the principle, Divide and conquer.

There is, perhaps, another class of causes for the alienation of the people from religion : a cause that generates not indifference only, but active unbelief. The religion that is offered has too little relation to life to be eagerly sought, as the nourishment of sorely pressed men appealing to God for light and

help beneath the temptations and sufferings of existence. Metaphysical theology is no fit answer to such cries. Their feeling is, 'if that is Christianity, it is no provision for our deepest wants,' and then all interest in it dies. The unbelief of the present day prevails principally among a portion of the educated class, who find in what they suppose to be Christianity nothing allied to their ordinary walk of thought; and among the vigorous minds of the practical class whose thoughts are drawn from the experiences of life, and not from the formulas of books; and who, besides, struggling to exist, and often, as they think, suffering unjustly, despise the religion of their oppressors, and resent the use that is made of Christianity as an instrument to school them to contentment, and keep them quiet under wrong. In such minds, too, suffering and struggling as they do, there naturally arises an impatient theorizing on the great subject of social progress; and since religion has no faith in these artificial schemes, and the corporate Christianity of the land has something more in such questions than a *spiritual* concern, they conclude, and often too truly, that in its political bearings it is indifferent to their interests, or takes the side against them.

Such is our religious state, and such apparently its causes. These evils are not to be removed by any one remedy. There is no plan that will make every man perfect in his social relations, and also make right those outward arrangements which so largely affect our moral life. From many quarters

must the agencies of the New Age come forth, and each working with its own instruments. But through all agencies and methods of improvement, through all diversities of operation from which change is to arise, there is one Spirit of God that worketh all in all,—the spirit of simple, affectionate, fraternal intercourse between man and man, so that no man is left without a moral friend,—and without this spirit in our hearts, all else must come to nought, and show itself the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal that it is.

The more Christian tone of general feeling that is now moving society to a sense of its past inhumanity, will do much—sanitary regulations and structural improvements in our streets and houses, will do much—a more responsible relationship of the employer to the employed, will do much—education and religion supplied to the poor by the rich, will do much—and a new sentiment of duty and of dignity in the breast of the working man, will do more than all ;—but all of these taken together will fall short of what is needed, and for the continuance of none of them is there any security, if we put our trust in Associations ;—unless through the individual relationships of life, wherever man meets man, there flows the simple, unaffected feeling of Christian regard, the sweetening influence of mutual respect and interest. I speak of no mawkish equality, of no impossible attempts to obliterate outward distinctions as if in such things lay our brotherhood ; but of that earnest, manly intercourse, which, when one man

speaks to another, makes him remember that he is speaking to one who has a human heart in his bosom, and a spirit like his own, under the discipline of that God, who is no respecter of persons.

You may determine its duties for society, and lament its neglect of them; but *you* are society, and under this abstract name you may hide and forget your own portion of the wrong. Every man who has a servant, and every woman who is a mistress—you who avail yourselves of any one of the myriad forms of human service—with you it lies to sweeten the relations of mankind; to you it has been committed, in the weary working of life, where wheel rolls and grinds on wheel, to pour in the oil of human respect and love. And every dwelling in which there is no recognition of what is suffered, needed, and felt by its lowest members, no remembrance of their affections—no question of their sorrows—no thought of their souls—every unspiritual man, who deems that payment and money set him right with all his race—every proud, unsympathizing, insolent woman, made for the world, and unsexed by heartlessness—these are the agents that work this spreading bitterness, and keep open these running sores.

The influence of institutions can never be an equivalent for the personal influence of individuals. They can neither penetrate so far, nor work so benignantly. Look at the work of education in our large schools: the throng—the inflexible system—the mere mechanism—the little attention to indivi-

duals—the impossibility of tender adaptation to the feeble and the slow,—and compare this with a child looking into its mother's eyes—with a boy brightening under his father's mind. In the one case, education is a living, gentle, earnest power, pursuing the most delicate work with the finest instruments ; in the other, it is apt to become a rude, blind, unfeeling routine ;—in the one, it stirs every emotion of intellect and heart, and in the other often sinks to the level of a mechanical employment. And so with the moral education of the poor. No general system will reach it. No schools and no churches will effect it. No preaching and no lecturing will touch it. Our indolence and our defective sympathies incline us to large schemes ; but God decrees that all effective good shall be wrought out in minutest portions by the toil of our hands, and its course channelled by the very pulsations of our hearts.

We must approach men as individuals, if we are to make our way to their affections—the only sources in them from which newness of life can spring. There is no power in words addressed to multitudes, to drill and insense them into habits of feeling and forms of character, of which they have no personal experience. You may preach to them in words of all the human charities, but what know they the more of a refinement they have never seen ; of a gentleness they have never witnessed ; of a brotherhood that has never borne their burdens, nor graced their dwellings ? The true ministers of religion are not her professional servants, but those who take advan-

tage of every natural relation towards men to perform spiritual offices, and, like Christ, come into personal contact with their daily life, with the temptations, and sufferings, and maladies of living hearts.

The public institutions of religion have their own work ; but they are manifestly not competent to the conversion and instruction of the lowest classes. They should kindle the spirit to do the work ; but the work itself is to be done, not in churches, but in personal intercourse between man and man. Effectual preaching for any class is rare, and for some classes an impossibility. Christ wrought his great effects, and left us the traces of his spirit, in streets, by the wayside, at meals, in cottages, in boats, by conversation, extempore acts, pointed remarks, words of counsel, and deeds of mercy, growing out of the circumstances. He simply met each event as it arose in the spirit of a perfect man, and there seems no farther plan in his life. He wrote nothing. He published nothing. He spoke to the wants of living men, with his eyes looking into theirs. And, though in another range of influence, it was so also with Socrates. We must look to the touch of personal power for the miracles of spiritual healing, for it is only through their living presence that holiness, moral beauty, Christian love, spiritual peace, become realities to undeveloped men.

The Ministry to the Poor is an agency of this kind ; and therein is the greatness of its claim, and the source of our hopes for its success. It does Christ's work in Christ's way. It goes about doing

good. In humble imitation of the Great Teacher, its ministers seek to incarnate again the Word of Life, that it may dwell with men. He is the great example of this ministry. It is easier to think of him in the street than in the Church. They have only to remember the earnest love that was in his tones, the holiness that was in his looks, the serene wisdom of his words, when, like him, they would speak to the sinner, and counsel the penitent and minister to the sick, and weep with the bereaved. The weapons of this ministry are, indeed, spiritual. It is heart acting on heart, conscience on conscience, soul on soul, man on man. Nor is it of less moment to *you* than it is to the poorest poor,—nay, of far greater, for you are God's representatives and stewards; and to whom much is given, of him much is required. It is less important to them that sit in darkness that Light should visit them, than it is to you that the Spirit of the Lord should be upon you, to do this work. Oh! swell these testimonies. Lay up these memorials. Multiply these proofs that you have passed from death unto life, because you love the brethren. Vindicate your faith by these works of faith. When you are asked what spirit you are of, whether God will acknowledge you, whether you carry the marks of the Lord Jesus upon you,—more and more may the answer of your Master give its silent assurance to your hearts: 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them!'

AN ADDRESS OF WELCOME INTO THE  
MINISTRY, TO STUDENTS LEAVING  
COLLEGE.<sup>1</sup>

THIS is called a Valedictory Service. Of what, of whom, do you take leave? Not of your studies; they are only beginning, with the instruments of their pursuit in your hands. Not of exercises of preparation for your great office; of these the coming hour of action intensifies the need, never to be relaxed, until in some clear form you get your discharge from God. If to-night, if to-morrow, your hand is on the plough, in some sense different from that of yesterday and all the years before, then farewell to an undetermined life; the purpose of your youth has stood fast, and the decision is given over to God of when you may take it off and where the furrow ends.

Your farewell to-night,—although in one sense only what all of us are for ever sighing forth to the

<sup>1</sup> At the Valedictory Service in Little Portland Street Chapel, at the end of the Session of Manchester New College, London, June 24, 1880; after the Farewell on behalf of the College had been given by Dr. Martineau, the Principal.

vanishing opportunities of yesterday and to-day, in that sense of it which differences you from everyone else here present, and from your former selves, marks an absolutely new departure, a leaving for ever of conditions of existence which will live in memory as the golden promise of your days, the spring-tide of your being, crowded with the activities of hope, while free from the responsibilities of action and we are not our brothers' keepers. Farewell to the time when it was your privilege to listen, to read, to think, and not yet your duty to speak. Farewell to the rapture of thought with the guiltless joy of silence. Farewell to the brooding over truth without a care as to how it may become as a winged arrow of light on its way to others : to the contemplation of the Supreme Good without a disturbing thought of how the vision is to be unveiled to eyes that are not our own. And though there will remain for you a deeper joy, a more perfect possession, a more real property in your vision and your truth when you can bring them to life and manifestation, yet before that hour of joy and of possession you will have to bear the agonies of their birth. Yes, your hour has come to leave behind delicious privileges of fruitful quietude, of dear and honoured guidance, and though on the pensive farewell there follows instantly the glad welcome to higher privileges of action and utterance, they are privileges which, as you are true and faithful, will cost you constant effort and secret tears.

To this high trust, your College, in the person of my honoured friend, commends and resigns you ; into this, the Christian ministry, the brotherhood of our Churches now hopefully receives you. And thus, between us, we represent the two aspects of this moment's crisis in your life, a closing and an opening door ;—behind you, responsibility to your own souls for a fruit-bearing season ;—before you, responsibility to the souls of others, and the Church of Christ, for a fruit-producing life-service. And the tender farewell and the trustful welcome are one benediction on your way, from those who give you to the Church for which they formed you, and from the Church which accepts you from their faithful hands.

And now you are asking the Church to witness your solemn disposal of yourselves, by your word and act from this night, letting protecting walls fall away from around you, to stand exposed to claims you invite the world to make, henceforth seeking to be sought, volunteers for the posts of trust, of danger, of honour, in the great conflict. But yesterday there were lines of action in which your fellow-men had no more right to look to you for special service than to knock at random at anybody's door and expect to find a physician's power and will to help. Now all this is changed. More than the physician's or the high priest's official plate, you place the cross upon your breast, self-devoted as you journey on your way to every man's needs into whose wounds you can pour healing oil and wine.

There is a sense in which that is the part of every man. Yes, but there is also a sense in which it peculiarly belongs to those who undertake special offices, who profess to minister to human want in special directions. It is not every man who declares it to be the business of his life to supply what is wanting to bodily health, to see the sources of disease, to take into his hands a broken frame, and whose very touch should make the sufferer feel that he is safe; that whatever human power can do for him, will be done. And so it is not everyone who undertakes to instruct mankind in the highest things, to heal the sick at heart, to prescribe the regimen of life. That is the meat and drink of the soul's vigour, and for all, whole or wounded, to make faith as reliable as sight, and hope more than experience, as the flower is more than the seed, the fulfilment than the promise. This is your profession, not imposed upon you, but assumed; and, as far as in you lies, to become adequate to what you profess is the clearest of obligations.

We sometimes hear at the present day, as if from an advanced spiritual position, that the Christian ministry enjoys an unrestricted liberty, that there is but one law of righteousness or of piety, that to all alike what is pure is open, what is impure forbidden, and what is permitted to anyone is permitted to everyone. That is either superficially common-place, or an utterly untenable claim. True, there is only one code of morality, but its first law

is to keep your engagements. You cannot voluntarily enter into relations which pledge your liberty and yet be free to do all that you might innocently do if you were unpledged ; and no one who offers himself for employment in services affecting mind, body, or estate is afterwards at liberty for pleasure or profit or distinction to give himself to pursuits or indulgences which make the service he might render of less efficiency, smaller in its quantity, or inferior in its quality. That is the clear rule of equity, not to render yourself less qualified than you might be for work undertaken, not to disappoint expectation on the faith of which you have accepted a trust confided to you. Where the work does not admit of outward measurement, and is of unlimited obligation, what freedom the rule may leave open is a question of conscience, and happy is he who condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth.

The special service you offer to the world is the ministry of life, the manifestation of life in religious knowledge with power to communicate it, spiritual discernment with power to awaken and nourish it, a determining energy in the will, a living force against resistances, with power to appeal to it and call it into action. Christ and the Christian ministry must have the same purpose. 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' Your opportunities for this work (I exclude those which you have in common with all men, and the unconscious influence which will attend you because

you are what you are) are public and are private, the pulpit and the spiritual friendship, the insight into hearts and lives arising out of the relations of your office which may be accorded to you. From the pulpit you speak not to this man nor to that, but to and of human nature, as its prophet and interpreter. In your pastoral offices so far as they are given to you in contact with the mystery of individual character and the varieties of individual condition, there is no kind of knowledge or experience, no delicacy of feeling or perception, no instructed insight or robust good sense, no tender grace of utterance commending the holy candour of uncompromising sincerity and truth, no soundness and vigour in yourselves, no restraining reverence or genial sympathy, that may not become factors in your work. I am not adequate, nor would it be possible now, to describe the containing circle of this power, or to map its contents; I can only attempt to put a suggestive mark here and there upon the varied sphere.

The purpose of preaching as distinct from all other public instruction is to call forth personal effort in the formation of character after the ideal of character, to manifest the perfect life to mind and heart and soul, knowing that such manifestation is but to paint the air unless the energy of the will is put forth to make it ours, and we love God and goodness with our strength. The natural sensibility or perception, the tendency not our own that

makes for righteousness is the gift of God, and nothing is ours but the effort, the sacrifice we make to honour and obey it. We are all subject to the strong delusion that what we feel we are, and no one more so than the preacher whose instrument is so largely pathetic speech.

The prophet was warned, 'Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words but do them not,' and the prophet himself can be caught in the meshes of expression, and if the heart beats, the tear starts, the voice trembles, take prompting impulses and forms of thought, pictures and pulsations, for spiritual substance. The deplorable failure of preaching is in the end for which it exists, in power to change the life and mould the character. Of Channing's Letter on Catholicism Blanco White said that this passage should be engraved in view of every pulpit :—'A common mistake is that life in the minister is emotion, but it consists much more in the clear conception, the deep conviction, of the reality of religion, the reality of virtue, of man's spiritual nature, of God, of immortality, of heaven. The tone that most proves a minister to be alive is that of calm entire confidence in the truth of what he says, the tone of a man who speaks of what he has seen and handled, the peculiar tone which belongs to one who has come fresh from what he describes, to whom the future world is as substantial as the present, who feels his own

spiritual nature as others feel their bodies, and to whom God is as truly present as the nearest fellow-creature.'

It follows from this that the proper use of whatever you have learned of your theological education, of critical science, of your knowledge of history and the growth of doctrine, is not to exhibit the clothes of the dead as ready materials for preaching, but mainly to give confidence, freedom, and security to the realities of your own religious life.

What advantage, then, hath the scholar? Much every way; chiefly that his are the oracles of God, and that his, therefore, ought to be the clearest trust in the oracles of his own spirit. The scholar who knows that he is in collision with no verified facts, with no revealed truths, with no law of history or nature, may give his soul free way, and carrying no dead weights yield himself without distrust to the teachings of the Spirit, and speak in faith of what is shown to him from whatever mount of vision God may raise him to. The high office of learning, though by itself it cannot lift you to a prophet's place, or touch your lips as with the live coal from the altar, is to prepare you to be taught of God without blinding prejudice, and without sceptic fear. The scholar, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven in things new and old, familiar with the analogies of the divine teachings, furnished with knowledge and Jesus' tests of truth, may in devout humility possess a just and clear confidence that he is not confusing

human fancies, dreams, or speculations with the mind of the Spirit.

The highest reward of religious culture and discipline is freedom to listen to God without paralyzing doubt. If your theological training, your mental and spiritual discipline, have opened to you, placed you in the way of, this great position, you have also been taught, and require not to be told, that only in the measure of the surrender and conformity of all our being to the Divine Teacher and His service can the freedom and recognition of His truth be continued to us. Neither of these factors of your power, knowledge and communion with God, will ever be complete ; our measure of them must be of continual growth. But to him that hath is given, and with the accordant life, without which freshness of inspiration cannot be, these must be eternally the ways of our ascent.

And neither serviceable knowledge nor spiritual experience are manna dropped from heaven. They are fruits of labour, bread of life, earned by more than the sweat of the brow, by the long toil of mind, and the vital assimilating action of the spirit. Though none of us are ever independent of teachers larger than ourselves, yet the deepest thinkers and the richest books would destroy the freshness of our touch and the value of our testimony if they impressed upon us formulæ of thought and faith, the elements of which are not living in ourselves. In spiritual things we must speak of what we know, of

what we have found, and as original discoveries, though what we discover belongs to the oldest prophetic ages, and has become the inheritance of mankind. Nor does this hold in religion only. To every vivid mind, 'in the youth of primy nature,' the images, the symbols, which are the poetic wealth of all the world, come fresh as the morning dew. Then do not be afraid of religious common-place. There is no common-place to you; it is common-place only when it is repeated without being freshly felt. Whatever deeply moves you will move others. It is old because it is true, and it will be new again to the most hackneyed of us all, if it breaks from you glistening with emotion. The freshness of our hearts avails more than the novelty of our thoughts. To abstain from speaking of what is most real to ourselves, lest it should be stale, is almost as insincere and as fatal an arrest upon development as to assume a style of thought and language to which we have not grown. The primitive feelings will perish if you suppress their natural expression, or if you force the flower. The ripest and loveliest forms of thought and faith, when genuine fruits of the soil, come only in the holy order of God's seasons—first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

We are told of Christ's ministry that his word was with power, and that the common people heard him gladly. He knew what was in man, and spoke to that in him which he knew must hear him. This

power of impressing himself on those whose most eager and active views were and remained far apart from his own, of making them feel with him when they could not think with him, attests the singular unity of his being. Only one in whom the spiritual harmony was entire, and its action constant, could have this uniform expressiveness for all orders of men unlike himself from Pilate downwards. In all things natural, never an ascetic, of sympathies so easy and genial as to expose him to reproach from the holy by profession, he yet knew his life-purpose and strove for it, and you must know yours. 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished? This unique power in the ministry of Christ, universality of nature and unity of expression, is not for direct or outward imitation; it can come only through leaven working in you till the whole is leavened, and the leaven that is to assimilate the whole is the spiritual leaven.

All things are lawful to the minister of religion that leave him the minister of religion, with its power concentrated in that character and its actions. He must not so dissipate himself as to lose spiritual expressiveness, and have no special office, work, or aim to which he is devoted. Our effective sphere or stroke is limited, and no extension or variety of being will compensate for the loss of intensity. You are not required to have universal knowledge, or to be in all things accomplished men of the world. You

are required to be able to strengthen the world's faith in God, and the life eternal ; to make clear the supremacy of the spiritual nature,—to help tempted men to be pure, merciful and righteous ; and to breathe into stricken hearts the one comfort that is sufficient for our utmost need, that the word of promise in which we have known of the Divine Goodness stands sure, and that great trials come to us that they may be greatly met. Any accomplishment tributary to this purpose will help the preacher. To lose sight of this purpose is to waste his consecrated hour, and let its sands run idly away. The preacher's rule is not over a wide and brilliant surface of intellectual excitements, but deep down to the hidden man of the heart, the spring of the living water. If you forget this, and there is a constant temptation to forget it,—for it will cost and consume you less to lecture brilliantly than to speak words of life out of the travail of the soul,—you will degrade your pulpit and your church to a place of secular entertainment where the instruments of knowledge or of eloquence have become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Your pastoral relations, so far as they are given you, will be best fulfilled when they become means and opportunities for your own enlargement. We are all as individuals poor and contracted when self-contained. We come to know the wealth of our nature only by partaking of the hearts and lives of others. That is the fruitful principle, to develop

which would exhaust the subject, and in those relations the minister of religion is different from other men only in his opportunity. We add the life of another to our own when we enter into an earnest human fellowship. We are not impoverishing ourselves, we are enriching ourselves, when we so know a fellow-being as to be capable of meeting his want, of speaking to his spirit out of our own. Unless we pass beyond ourselves to comprehend him, to feel through his feelings and condition, to understand how things appear to him, the manner of his thinking, and where and why the burden presses, he is quite external to us, and we external to him. We give him nothing, and we gain nothing; we are simply out of communication. When Wordsworth watched with delight a loving child with her lamb, talking to it, trying to understand its wants, to reason with and comfort it, and put her into song, he knew that though something of it was his, the larger part was hers, for he had received her heart into his own, and if she could have known his rendering of the workings of her face she would have been less enriched by him than he had been by her. He gave the poet's interpretation; she had given to him the freshness of a child's heart. And so in every case of earnest sympathy there is interchange and interaction of life. We give something, we gain more; what we give we do not lose, and what we gain is a spiritual enlargement of our being. Short of this, human kindness and goodwill are

always comforting and helpful, often beyond what we know, but we are speaking of the fellowship that gives new life and receives it.

Pastoral duty is often called oppressive, and it will be so if, from excessive quantity or other causes, it becomes official work, which leaves our own inner life and experience only what they were, or less than they were, deadened and dishonoured by affected interest and unreal service. But when the interest is genuine, whether we are to help or to be helped, to give or to serve, we are made larger than we were. We must go beyond ourselves to take in more of the life of God ; we must go beyond ourselves to take in more of the life of humanity. In either case there will be toil and strain, the toil of aspiration, the sacrificial strain of fellowship. In either case more of life, more of the life of God in man is the exceeding great reward. And all this is only what is hidden in the deep words about finding our life and losing it. That, indeed, is our far-off ideal, but it is our standard, and it has been reached, and the ministry of life must compel it to be recognized, though the recognition is in sorrow and in shame.

Your welcome into the ministry of the Christian Church cannot be without some tones of solemn tenderness from one who is not ignorant of the trials that await you. There is no other calling in which the weight falls the heaviest in its earliest years. The demands of the pulpit are incessant ; the foun-

tain does not always flow. Your people will not understand this; they will not know the cost at which you speak to them. No one knows it but those who have borne it. But it can be borne, and you expect it, and are resolved not to take easy means of escape from it, and, as you value the growth of your souls, that you will not cut yourselves off from this supreme blessing of God or the reality of your work by withholding the sacrifice He and it exact. If this is so, and it is so,—for this is not the stage of your life at which you could come to the altar with false offerings,—then, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, you have this to rest on,—that whatever else this age may be, there never was a time more free from religious indifference. There will always be, recurring in changed forms, a want of reconciliation between those looking on different sides of the shield of truth, the side that is on the heart, mirroring the inner light, and the side reflecting external and material nature. Fulfil your own part. It is yours to make clear and full the testimony of the Spirit; and the world is absolutely sighing for religion in the pulpit, for unmixed oracles of the Spirit in the courts of God. There are none, we may say, in this age desiring to suppress any truth; but there are multitudes desiring, and rightly desiring, that the supernatural truth, not miraculous but supersensual, the truth that inspires and has sustained all that is worth living for, should at least be sure of an unbroken hearing in the temples that are

dedicated to it. This is your opportunity, to speak your messages from the Spirit, in their full-voiced music, without disturbing strains.

And as to the love and honour for his work's sake, ready for him who can take the place of a religious friend, ask any elder brother minister who has tried to live for others, and he will tell you that the suffering which awaits you is not from coldness and discouragement, but the shame and reproach of your own heart, a mourning for what might have been, from the undeserved gratitude of men.

I pray God to sustain the purpose of your hearts, and to give you grace and strength to honour and fulfil the promptings of His Spirit.

## APPENDIX.

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### LIST OF MR. THOM'S PUBLICATIONS.

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SERMONS AND OCCASIONAL PAPERS, selected from the papers of the late Rev. John Hincks, with a Memoir of the Author, 1832.

THE LIFE OF THE REV. JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE, written by himself, with portions of his Correspondence. Three volumes. 1845.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS : an Attempt to convey their Spirit and Significance. 1851.

HYMNS, CHANTS, AND ANTHEMS, selected and arranged. (The Renshaw-street Chapel Hymn-book.) 1858.

CHRIST THE REVEALER, so called in the first two editions only on the cover, and with the fuller title : THE REVELATION OF GOD AND MAN IN THE SON OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN. Six Sermons preached in Renshaw-street Chapel. 1859. Reprinted in 1879, by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, with the addition of two Essays from the *Theological Review*, on 'The Doctrine of an Eternal Son,' and 'Prayer.' Third edition, 1898.

LETTERS embracing his Life of John James Tayler, B.A., Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Biblical Theology, and Principal of Manchester New College, London. Two volumes. 1872.

PREFACE to the Second Edition of 'Echoes of Holy Thoughts: arranged as Private Meditations before a First Communion.' (Williams and Norgate.) 1872.

This little book, first published at the beginning of 1871, written by a life-long member of Mr. Thom's congregation, with his encouragement, and revised by him, contains in chapters 5 and 6 recollections of his Communion Addresses, and in the earlier chapters other 'Echoes.' To the second edition an eighth chapter was added, of which the first five pages are from Mr. Thom's pen; so are pages 50-52, which in the first edition appeared in inverted commas. In the second edition Mr. Thom would not allow this mark of authorship to be retained.

LAWS OF LIFE AFTER THE MIND OF CHRIST. First Series, 1883; Second Series, 1886. New edition of both volumes (Philip Green), 1901.

After Mr. Thom's death a further volume of his sermons, under the title A SPIRITUAL FAITH, was published with a Memorial Preface by Dr. Martineau. In this volume three of the sermons from Mr. Thom's 'Corinthians' were included, and two other sermons, which had already been separately printed, but the rest were then published for the first time (Longmans), 1895.

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#### SERMONS SEPARATELY PRINTED.

*(Preached, if not otherwise stated, in Renshaw-street Chapel, Liverpool).*

A Sermon on the occasion of the death of William Roscoe July 17, 1831.

Two Sermons on the Necessity for a Christian Ministry in Special Adaptation to the Poor, Christmas Day, 1835 (reprinted 1887).

The Doctrine of Waste, a Discourse delivered in Prince's Street Chapel, Cork. May 8, 1836.

The Imitableness of Christ's Character, a Discourse delivered in Prince's Street Chapel, Cork. May 8, 1836.

The Doctrine of Forgiveness. January 28, 1839.

- The Spiritual Bonds of Society Gradually Supplanting the Outward ones of Fear, Force, and Law. February 24, 1839.
- Preventive Justice and Palliative Charity ; or, Wisdom for the Future and Mercy for the Present. On behalf of the Liverpool Dispensaries. Nov. 30, 1845. (Reprinted in this volume, without the notes).
- The Claim of Ireland (with an Appendix on the Fast). March 7, 1847.
- A Sermon on the death of the Rev. J. Johns, Minister to the Poor in Liverpool. July 4, 1847. (Reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury* of July 6.)
- The Philanthropist in Humble Life : a notice of the late Thomas Wilkinson, of Liverpool. January 16, 1848. (Reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury* of February 8.)
- Spiritual Blindness and Social Disruption. Preached in Essex Street Chapel, May 3, 1849. On behalf of the London Domestic Mission Society.
- Religion, the Church and the People. Preached in Lewin's Mead Chapel, Bristol, September 23, 1849. On behalf of the Ministry to the Poor in Bristol. (Reprinted in this volume.)
- Charge to the Congregation, on the Induction of Rev. J. H. Hutton, at Barton Street Chapel, Gloucester. Thursday, November 22, 1849.
- Many Folds in One, or the Peculiar Aspects of the Gospel, which find no representation except in Unitarian Christianity. Sermon in Essex Street Chapel, London, Wednesday, May 22, 1850, at the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.
- Ecclesiastical Pretensions, Romish and English ; with the Antidote which a Catholic Protestantism supplies. Nov. 17, 1850.
- The Religious Spirit that befits this Crisis ; not the Spirit of Humiliation : War with Russia being the Nation's highest Sacrifice to God and Duty ; else, to be Abstained from as Iniquity. (On the Sunday before the day appointed for National Humiliation.) April 23, 1854.
- A Farewell Sermon. June 25, 1854.
- The Preacher and the Church. Three Sermons (on resuming his Ministry). November 1, 8, and 15, 1857.

- The Permanent Function of the Son of God in quickening Spiritual Life (in the *Unitarian Pulpit*). June, 1858. (Reprinted from a revised copy in 'A Spiritual Faith.')
- A Religion, not a Theology, the Want of the Times ; a Plea for the Missionary Project of the Provincial Association of English Presbyterians in Lancashire and Cheshire. February 20, 1859.
- A Sermon on the occasion of the death of Mr. Charles Booth. February 12, 1860. (Printed for private circulation.)
- Sympathy with Humanity, the Channel of the Life from God. December 22, 1861. (On the death of the Prince Consort, with reference also to National misunderstandings at the time of the American Civil War.)
- The Act of Uniformity. A Commemorative Sermon. August 24, 1862. (Reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury*.)
- Distress in the Manufacturing Districts. Dec. 7, 1862.
- The Witness of the Spirit (on the Re-opening of Renshaw Street Chapel after alterations). August 4 and 11, 1863.
- The Church of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus : One Fold and One Shepherd (containing parts of the Sermon preached before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1850. August 12, 1866. (Reprinted in this volume.)
- The Church of God's Building : a Farewell Sermon. Feb. 24, 1867.
- The Immortality of Man attested by Christ. (Essex Hall Pulpit.) 1894.

## LECTURES IN THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY OF 1839.

- The Practical Importance of the Unitarian Controversy. Christianity not the Property of Critics and Scholars ; but the gift of God to all men.
- The Unscriptural Origin and Ecclesiastical History of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

The Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, who dwelleth in us,  
and teacheth all things.

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A Letter to the Rev. Thomas Byrth, Rector of Wallasey (in  
reply to a letter arising out of the second of the above  
lectures, which had followed Mr. Byrth's lecture entitled  
'The Unitarian Interpretation of the New Testament,  
based upon Defective Scholarship, or on dishonest or  
uncandid Criticism').

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ADDRESSES, AS VISITOR, TO THE STUDENTS  
IN MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty. June,  
1868.

Address, without further title, on the Power of the Pulpit.  
June, 1877.

The Minister and Spiritual Life. June, 1879.

*The first and third of these Addresses are reprinted in the  
volume 'Theology and Piety, alike Free,' published by an old  
Student of the College in 1890. (Kegan Paul and Co.)*

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ARTICLES IN REVIEWS.

In the *Christian Teacher* (new series), of which Mr.  
Thom was Editor, from July, 1838, until October,  
1844.

1838 (in the first volume, including six quarterly numbers,  
but dated 1839)—

How is Life to be Maintained in the Unitarian Churches.

The Connection of Natural and Divine Truth.

1839—The Pastoral Office as Modified by the Progress of  
Character and of Religious Ideas.

Political Economy and Christianity.

Self-Culture (on Channing's lecture).

The Nation's Religion and the Nation's Education.

- 1840—The Oxford School of Theology.  
Dr. Tuckerman.  
The New Testament, translated from the Text of J. J. Griesbach by Samuel Sharpe.
- 1841 (In this and the following years the Editor's articles are not initialled as in the earlier volumes, and the list, though probably accurate as far as it goes, is hardly complete).  
The Question of Miracles.  
Joseph Blanco White.
- 1842—Dewey's Discourses on Human Life.
- 1843—Dr. Channing (Notice of English and American Sermons occasioned by his death).  
The Scottish Church Question.
- 1844—Dewey's Discourse on the Character and Writings of Dr. Channing.  
Religious Union and Intellectual Freedom.  
Unitarianism, its Present Duties and Prospects.  
In the *Prospective Review* :—
- 1845—Sydney Smith.  
Christian Fellowship (with reference to Theodore Parker).
- 1846—The Life and Correspondence of John Foster.
- 1847—National Education.
- 1849—Italy in the Nineteenth Century.
- 1850—Dr. Chalmers' Life and Writings.
- 1854—Newland's Life of Judson : Christianity in Burmah.
- In the *National Review* :—
- 1857—The Relations of Art to Religion.
- In the *Theological Review* :—
- 1864—Theodore Parker.
- 1866—Ecce Homo.
- 1867—Archbishop Whately and the Life of Blanco White.
- 1868—The Doctrine of an Eternal Son in Organic Communion with the Human Soul.<sup>1</sup>
- 1869—Mr. Binney's Sermons.
- 1870—Dr. Newman's Grammar of Assent.
- 1874—Prayer.<sup>1</sup>
- 1875—In Memoriam : W. J. Lamport.
- 1876—Tayler's Retrospect of the Religious Life of England.

<sup>1</sup> These two essays are reprinted in the two last editions of 'Christ the Revealer.'

## **Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ.**

First and Second Series, 1883 and 1886. New Edition, 1901  
(Philip Green). Price 2s. 6d. each, net.

### **CONTENTS OF THE FIRST SERIES, 1883.**

Christianity, the Impersonation of the Love that is in God—  
The Universality of Christianity—Aptitudes for Disciple-  
ship—Grounds of Trust in God—The Goodness and the  
Severity of God—Ours to work out what God works in  
us—Knowing and Doing—The Spirit willing, the Flesh  
weak—Circumstance, 'the unspiritual God'—Heart  
Secrets of Joy and Bitterness—Moralities without the  
Spirit of Life—No Supererogation in Spiritual Service—  
Brotherhood towards the Unattractive and the Repel-  
lant—The Judging Spirit—The Morality of Temper—  
Self-denial—A Perfect Man, who offends not in word—  
Strengthen what remains—Not of the World, as Christ  
was not of the World—Our Lord's 'Trouble of Soul'—  
Spiritual Counterparts to Temptation and Despondency  
—Loving God with our Strength—Disquiet of Spirit—  
Quiet from God—From the Seen to the Unseen.

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### **CONTENTS OF THE SECOND SERIES, 1886.**

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overcometh the World—The Fatherhood of God—The  
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Omission—Conversion—Love, the fulfilling of the Law  
—The Peace of Trust in God—The Conditions of Re-  
ceiving Christ's Bequest of Peace—Wilful Sin against  
one Law of the Spirit, entire Disloyalty—The Moral  
Limits of Accident—Use and Abuse of Religious Sensi-  
bility—Worse than an Infidel—Diversities of Gifts Co-  
operating by One Spirit—'By their Fruits shall ye know  
them'—Religion and the Child—Casual Diversions of  
Spirit, and the Ever-present Comforter—The Resurrec-  
tion World—Christ's Law of Love to our Neighbour—  
The Lordship of Service—Living and Dying unto the  
Lord of Life—Spiritual Gains of Bereavement—Un-  
spiritual Objections to Spiritual Christianity—The Trans-  
figuration of Souls.

## **Christ the Revealer.**

1859. With Two Essays added, 1879. New Edition, 1898  
(Philip Green). Price 2s. net.

### **CONTENTS.**

**SERMONS :** Our Lord touched with our infirmities, and tempted by our temptations, yet without Sin—Our Lord, tempted as we are yet without Sin, leading all tempted Men to the Grace and Help of God—The Christian Unitarian Position : (1) Doctrinal—The Christian Unitarian Position : (2) Devotional and Pastoral—The Harmony of God's Moral Attributes, the Fulness of the Godhead, reflected in the Spirit of Christ—Inspiration and Miracle.

**ESSAYS :** On the Doctrine of an Eternal Son in Organic Communion with the Human Soul : does it tend to exalt or to degrade the type of religious life?—On Prayer.

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## **A Spiritual Faith.**

WITH A MEMORIAL PREFACE BY DR. MARTINEAU

(Longmans). Out of print.

### **CONTENTS.**

God is a Spirit—Spiritual Likeness to God—The Contents of a Living Soul—Sons and Heirs of God—Children of the Father in Heaven—Prayer the Communion of the Holy Spirit—The Perfect Love of God—Honour all Men—‘Oh that I had Wings like a Dove!’—The Greatest is Love—An Unselfish Servant of the Truth—A True Man Uncorrupting and Incorruptible—As a Little Child—The Character of Jacob—The World's Need of Christ—John the Baptist—The Witness of the Spirit—The Permanent Function of the Son of God in quickening Spiritual Life—The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus—The Perpetual Symbolism of the Last Supper—The Church of the Living God—Spiritual Oneness with the Father and with the Son.





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